Kenshin no Keishousha
Volume 1

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These are novel illustrations that were included in **Volume 1**

鏡遊
Illustration
みけおう
剣神の継承者
サクシード
MF文庫
J

剣神の継承者
ソウルシード
鏡遊
Illustration
みけおう

ラーシュ
クロウの同僚。クロウとは
ある因縁がある。
さくらい・ひなこ
桜井日奈子
太陽教教祖の娘。
とある事情からクロウとは同居中。
クロウ
人間ながらにして卓越した
剣技を持つ、本作の主人公。
セフィ
クロウの幼馴染み。
クロウの剣に興味がある。

剣神の継承者

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Prologue

"Oh come on, why are you guys here of all places!?"

A sharp complaint echoed from one of the girls dorms.

"Quiet down Sefi, it's supposed to be peaceful at night!"

Kurou was sitting on the sofa in the living room, smiling as he looked towards the other person in the room————Sefi. Her blonde hair was tied to the side and she was wearing a suit.

"Ugh, you're so bossy....."

Sefi retorted as she lowered her voice. This was one of the dorms within the girls residential building.

It was already late into the night, causing a ruckus would probably disturb the other students.

"However, going back to what I said, this room is quite comfortable. The air conditioning here is great and the couch is very cushiony."

Sitting next to Kurou was a black-haired girl wearing maid attire————Hinako, who was currently eating chocolate cake as she spoke.

“That’s my cake! How dare you eat it without my permission!”

“This perfect level of sweetness mixed with a hint of bitterness forms a wonderful harmonious melody.”

“I didn’t ask for your opinion!”

Sefi forgot all about keeping quiet as she yelled once again. Afterwards, she heaved a heavy sigh.

“Jeez, you guys are so carefree. Fortunately I’m still waiting on the elimination match.”

“Well I’m in the same boat as you. That’s why I figured I should conserve my strength in a place like this.”

“You probably don’t even care one bit about the elimination match. Speaking of which, you sure have guts to sneak into a girls dorm with a girl.”

"Something to this extent is no biggie. Anyways, why don't you have a seat Sefi?"

"You don't need to tell me. After all, this is my couch."

Sefi contemptuously responded and with a *thud* she sat down alongside Kurou.

"Sefi, if you're nervous, how about I give you a massage?"

"If you're the one giving me the massage, how am I supposed to know where you plan on touching me?"

"Of course I'll be massaging your entire body....."

"You don't have to make it so clear you pervert!"

"......Going back to the topic at hand."

Hinako, who remained silent as she was eating the cake, spoke up in a hushed tone.

"It would appear that Sefi always puts up a front, but actually ends up saying OK every time. However, Kurou is also just a wimp for stalling with only a bit of sexual harassment even after realizing this."

"What.....!?"

"Hold on, who did you just say was always OK with this!?"

Kurou and Sefi were both dumbstruck.

"I see, youthful teenage girls and boys tend to be considerate of each other's relationship going into the future, thus they do not dare step past certain boundaries even in the heat of the moment.....noted."

"Quit your studying! You shouldn't be analyzing everything."

Sefi, with her face completely flushed red, voiced her complaint towards Hinako.

"Fufu, my sexual harassment should be taken to the next level. To even be called a coward, then I guess I'll start with her upper garments, no wait, perhaps it'll be better if I just directly massage her chest————"

"So that's how it's going to be, I get it!"

Sefi interrupted Kurou and immediately took action.

She grabbed the hilt of the gargantuan sword lying diagonally against the wall in the corner of the living room————

"You are really asking to be slashed by me!"

"In the end, it'd be best if there was skin-to-skin contact!"

As Kurou shouted in reply, he grabbed the hilt of his katana that was strapped to his waist. He then took a step to get Sefi within range of his blade.

Kurou and Sefi both held on to the hilt of their swords, and after staring each other down for a few seconds————

"Sigh, we shouldn't be doing something as foolish as this during the night."

"I totally agree."

The two of them eased their grip on their swords and sighed.

"I feel a bit thirsty, I'm going to make some tea. I assume you guys want some too."

Sefi headed towards the kitchen.

“.....In all honesty, the mischief caused between the two of you is like no other.”

“That’s because our relationship isn’t normal.”

Kurou sarcastically stated with a wry smile.

Even with all the silly trifles, his time spent with Sefi and Hinako has been very thrilling. Recalling the circumstances back then, he felt that these sporadic squabbles weren't something to be concerned about.

Kurou reflected over how it all started————in the end, it was probably still that one night.

It all began in a certain district one evening, when blood was spilt everywhere————

Chapter 1 - The Sword Academy

Tokyo Swordia————

Formerly this city was known as the Tokyo metropolis, but currently in the 21st century, the otherworldly Swordies have ruled over the city since the Great War seventy years ago.

Tokyo Swordia was divided into two regions. In other words, the Swordies resided within the Specialized Central Region while humans inhabited the Outer Human Region.

Being the dominant social class, the Specialized Central Region where all the Swordies lived controlled all political and economic functions. To everyone else in the world, they had the most elegant districts. In contrast , the Outer Human Region felt quite unbalanced with the quality among the districts being starkly different.

It was already past ten in the evening, yet it was quite rambunctious on this particular bustling street in the Outer Human Region which had rows upon rows of bars lined up for construction.

Slightly away from the ruckus within the corner of this region sits an old-fashioned hotel.

Located underneath the hotel was a parking garage. Parked within its depths was a van with its engine running and the shadows of multiple figures gathered around the vehicle. There were five of them in total and all of them were wearing what appeared to be white robes.

One of the members, who was currently breathing heavily, appears to have been wounded. Although medical aid was being received from a friend, it seems the bleeding could not be stopped.

"Looks like I've already caught up."

For some reason, these words startled the others as they turned towards the sound of the approaching footsteps.

These robe wearing people all reacted in unison, directing their gaze towards the figure that showed up.

"If you want to escape you should be giving it everything you have, not dilly-dallying around in this sort of place."

A young teenager wearing a red long coat appeared within the parking garage.

From the opening in the front of the long coat, one could see that the somewhat short teenager possessed a slender figure.

Along with his disheveled black hair, there remained a childish facial complexion. However, under the fringe of his hair, his eyes carried an exceptionally sharp expression.

"Well, if you guys were to scatter in disarray you would all be interrogated. That said, you guys also killed four police officers which is quite unacceptable to be honest. You bastards, I'm pretty strict when it comes to losing my comrades. I will keep on pursuing you all even if you were to run to the ends of the earth."

"Are you one of the Sabers?"

One of the robed members shouted in a sharp tone. Unwavered, the teenager wryly smiled in response.

"As you can see."

The teenager————Kurou, pointed to the silver sword insignia on his long coat with his index finger.

The so-called Sabers were Tokyo Swordia's public security force. They were a separate entity from the police force.

"I'd appreciate it if you guys would allow me to make a peaceful arrest. However, if there is any resistance————"

Kurou placed his hand on the hilt of the katana strapped to his waist. Just by looking at its composition, one could tell it was definitely not an ornament or a counterfeit. Instead, it was a thoroughly used and authentic blade.

"This is the end for all of you, followers of the sun."

Even without inquiring, Kurou already knew their true identity.

The so-called Sun Cult was just as its name indicated. The religious organization was comprised of followers who worshipped the teachings of the sun.

In the last couple of years, these thugs would frequently engage in terrorist activities. The number of victims from these terrorist activities have already reached triple digits. Thess Sabers, who were part of the public security force, have made the Sun Cult their number one priority.

Because the van of the Sun Cult followers arrived at a police checkpoint tonight, they decided to forcefully break through. During their escape, they killed four police officers and are currently still fleeing.

Since the Sabers sent out a dispatch request, Kurou, being a member, caught up to them here.

"Hey——, what is this, it hasn't started yet? Fortunately I leisurely walked over here."

Unexpectedly, an extremely clear voice sounded.

Behind Kurou came another guy that entered the parking garage. He too kept a sword by his waist and

also wore the exact same long coat marked with the silver insignia.

"Are you an idiot? You're currently on the job, you better get over here quickly Lars."

"Yeah yeah, you're so stringent as usual Kurou."

He elatedly smiled. Lars was also a member of the Sabers.

Within the Sabers, he and Kurou worked together as a pair. Although he was about five centimeters taller than the short-statured Kurou, his face also seems to have retained a puerile complexion. In fact, he was only a teenager who was fifteen years of age.

His appearance was well-kept and his hair was practically white. However, he claims the color was " platinum".

Even though Lars followed an alternate path when chasing the criminals, the two pretty much found them at the same time.

"Despite being Sabers, there are only two of you against the five of us! We have complete control here!"

One of the cultists, who was tending to a comrade of his, spoke up in an acute voice. In response, the other cultists all whipped out their katanas.

In Japan, it was to be expected that ordinary people were prohibited from carrying firearms. In fact, the Sabers, police, and even the military's main weaponry was the sword. Likewise, the weapons of the terrorists were no exception.

It was very hard to see clearly into the shadow of the van, but it was without a doubt the voice of a female cultist————she was a very young teenage girl. Upon closer inspection, she was the only one who wasn't wearing a robe. Instead, she wore a white veil along with a blue nun getup.

Her eyes were filled with tears, yet she unyieldingly glared at Lars.

"Hey Kurou, is this the opponent you’re responsible for?"

"It's not really a responsibility....."

Kurou wryly smiled and advanced forward.

He knew this girl, her name was Kido Akari.

She was a member of the Sun Cult's combat forces. However, for some reason they encountered each other numerous times during Kurou's missions. Even though those encounters have all been due to chance, it was true that there did exist some underlying reason for this.

"Akari, every time.....we seem to encounter each other. Gradually I'm starting to believe this isn't an ill-fated relationship but rather destiny at work here."

"That seems to be the case. Why does it have to turn out like this....."

Akari lowered her gaze as she spoke————

"Hmm? What's wrong? You seem to have some deeply mixed emotions."

"There's no such thing!"

Inadvertently, her piercing glare fixated on Kurou.

"If it is destiny, then that destiny would also include me slaughtering you, you Swordie dog!"

"A dog....."

"Plus, you Swordies are not even part of this world, how could we accept a nation inhabited with you people! "

Akari pulled out her katana and got into her stance. Despite having a bit of flair to it, Kurou understood Akari's strength. Based on her technique, she was probably incapable of defeating any of the Sabers.

"Akari, you can choose to fight, however if this wounded person is left unattended to like this then he will die. This kind of emergency care right now is just prolonging his pain."

"Guh.....!"

Akari tightly bit her lips.

Perhaps she realized that Kurou wasn't just trying to complicate matters.

"Hey, you guys can withdraw. Sorry for arriving late."

"Hmm.....?"

Kurou slightly tilted his head at the sound of this sudden voice.

With her presence pretty much undetected, at some point a female figure appeared alongside the followers of the sun.

She wasn't wearing the white robe of the Sun Cult. Instead, her attire consisted of a skimpy mini-skirt, a tightly fitted suit, and there was a bizarre sword suspended along her waist.

"Allowing me to deal with these Sabers idiots should be fine. Let me take care of the cargo and that one other thing in the van. The streets are filled with police checkpoints so you'll be instantly caught if you escape by car."

"......Understood, we are counting on you."

After Akari finished speaking, the rest of the Sun Cultists nodded. From the looks of it, they had no intention to continue causing trouble. Akari and the others glanced back at the van every so often before running away.

Both Kurou and Lars had already lost interest in the Sun Cultists who already fled.

Kurou once again inspected the woman.

The woman's age was probably between twenty and twenty-five years old. She had gleaming short brown hair and although she was quite an attractive person, this was not the appropriate time to be taking note of these sort of things.

"Are you a Swordie?"

"Just like the ones you've seen."

The woman nodded in response to Kurou's question. She then retrieved the sword by her waist in one swift motion.

It was a slender double-edged longsword. The sight of this type of sword wasn't rare, but————

"Ho, is this the light blade?"

Kurou muttered in admiration.

Known as the light blade, the drawn out sword was enveloped by a faint white light. When the light blade was activated, the sword becomes incredibly hard to bend, break, and furthermore it was very keen-edged.

"Ah so you are a Swordie, and a pretty powerful one as well."

Kurou once again muttered.

The Swordies are considered to be residents from the mystifying world of Swordia.

These otherworldly people and earth's human beings practically look the same. Even though many of them possessed hair and eye colors not found in normal humans, but other than that they were essentially alike.

Despite Swordies and humans having nearly identical physique, the Swordies' physical capabilities were quite outstanding. Their strength and speed were both exceptional.

Furthermore, the most frightening thing was their overwhelming natural disposition to the ways of the sword. Hence, all Swordies were inherently sword specialists.

To add to that, if one becomes a first-class user they could engage in battle with a light blade empowered sword like this woman.

"It ends right here wanted criminal number FZ405333!"

Suddenly a voice rang.

Just like Kurou and Lars, these guys were also wearing red long coats. There were six of them and each held a sword in their hands.

They were all Swordies and members of the Sabers———in other words, they were also Kurou's colleagues. Presumably they too arrived by tracking the followers of the sun.

"This woman is a wanted criminal. In the past she killed two of our members. Clearly a Swordie, she's actually a lunatic for helping out the Sun Cult."

The one member with the beard spoke up. Kurou also recognized this man. He was one of the older members of the Sabers and possessed excellent finesse.

"You guys can step down. It's too much of a burden for newcomers to face a light blade user."

The man with the beard stated without even looking at Kurou. He then raised his sword and the other five members followed suit.

From the looks of it, they wanted to steal all the glory. Whether it was the bearded man or the other members, it seemed none of them could utilize the light blade. Even so, with it being six to one perhaps they could win.

"Well, it doesn't matter to me how many people I face. Bring it on."

The Swordie woman brazenly smiled as she replied.

Haa——. The bearded man yelled out and charged towards the Swordie woman with the other five members.

The majority of the Sabers members were adept at fighting. The bearded man and the other members probably had numerous experiences fighting enemies

with swords. The six of them stormed in simultaneously and while doing so, they had to avoid slicing their own allies in battle.

No one should ever take the enemy lightly due to superiority in numbers. For the sake of killing this one woman, the six men all risked their lives in the attack.

"Haha."

However, the woman was unfazed.

After the woman had seen through the incoming attack from the group of six, she slashed at the bearded man who led the attack, cutting his head off with just one swing of the sword. In quick succession, her sword sliced through a person's torso and then the face of another person.

From the perspective of a normal person, the three of them would seem to have been simultaneously killed. It would be hard for anyone to discern such a high caliber technique.

There was blood vigorously spraying out of the bodies of the men. The part of the body that suffered the violent hit had been greatly carved out.

The woman hardly stopped there. She then slashed at two others diagonally from the shoulders and pierced the last person in the heart————the group of six were now all dead.

Her abilities were indeed extremely impeccable.

"What was that? That was way too easy. Battling against men isn't fun after all."

The woman muttered with an ennui expression. Actually, she probably felt extremely bored. Even though six people attacked her, she still eliminated them instantly. It really was way too easy for her. The difference in their abilities was profoundly visible.

"Hey, that's pretty impressive."

Lars apathetically spoke. At some point in time he retrieved his cellphone in order to look something up.

"Hmm, that woman has a very high bounty, it's at one million. If we were to consider the six members of our group that were killed, the bounty will probably continue to rise."

"Lars, you should have said something earlier!"

"What are you getting all tensed up over. You don't need to worry about anyone stealing your glory now. Oh , by the way, the million is only if you capture her alive. If you captured her dead you would only get three hundred thousand. Well then, good luck."

Lars wryly smiled as he turned off his cellphone.

"Understood. Hence, let me be your opponent. I'll be in your care."

Kurou joyously spoke and proceeded to swiftly pull out the katana by his waist.

"......A katana? You rascal, you're clearly one of the Sabers, why would you still use that kind of thing?"

Having said that, the criminal ringleader's eyes opened widely, staring intently at Kurou.

"You bastard.....could it be, you are a human?"

"Even if I were to say 'just like the ones you've seen', you probably wouldn't understand. Well, I guess only humans would use katanas anyways."

Kurou calmly stated as he motioned his katana.

"Hahaha! Originally I had thought the Sabers were just a group of idiotic men. I never would've thought that a human would also be accepted as a member. Has the lack of talent already reached this extent?"

"Jeez, it really annoys me that you would call it a group of idiotic men. I really can't tolerate this abuse towards humans like me."

The Sabers included non-combative members as well. This tiny organization didn't even have a thousand members yet.

The composition of the Sabers consisted entirely of Swordies except for Kurou. On the flip side, the police were practically all humans. It probably would have been more natural if Kurou were part of the police.

There was some reason behind Kurou's recruitment into the Sabers. It wasn't because of a lack of talent, however Kurou wasn't about to kindly explain to that extent.

"Nevertheless, from the looks of it you are clearly a Swordie assisting these humans."

"If I were to be on the Swordies' side, most likely I'd only be able to face the boring swordsmanship of the humans. I want to battle the powerful Swordies. Is that white-haired boy a Swordie? If you don't battle, this human is going to die."

"I'll consider it, but I'm not too worried over my financial situation."

Lars pretended to joke around, even deliberately shrugging while he was at it.

"......Well, forget it. In the end, both of you will die. Before that happens though, please entertain me for a bit. "

"Oh trust me you won't be bored at all."

Kurou faintly smiled and prepared his stance. Although it was rather mundane, the sword was held straight and centered in his stance.

The criminal ringleader also smiled in the same manner. It was a smile of mockery. She never thought she would ever have to battle against a human.

Kurou inched around trying to maintain his distance. He would never underestimate his opponent. From now on, it will be the relentless pursuit of survive and kill.

"Hey human, I got something to say first. You better not bring your human values into this."

"You mean just because you're a woman? Haha, of course I won't."

This was the monster who instantly killed six people. Even so, this human boy was still able to think in such a manner.

These sorts of things were only humanity's fallacious logic after all.

From the Swordies' point of view, it was considered utter nonsense.

Basically for the Swordies, when comparing the athletic abilities of men to women, women were vastly superior, even in swordsmanship.

From the perspective of the swordswomen, Swordie males were existences of a lower class. Although the Sabers members who were easily eliminated by her had received training and had numerous combat experiences, for this outstanding swordswoman who was also the criminal ringleader, it could hardly be called a fight against the six of them.

Stored within the Swordies was something known as light energy. In terms of physical strength, light was a more superior energy source than what humans were capable of using.

In general, a woman's light quantity was vastly plentiful. The greater the quantity, the more physical power one possessed. Precisely due to this, Swordie women were able to utilize far greater combat strength.

Members of the Sabers were practically all male Swordies. If they were up against human terrorists, the

male members would be enough to deal with them. However, if the criminal was a female Swordie, many times the situation would develop into a grim battle.

Humans wouldn't even stand a chance. Regardless of gender, it was impossible to overcome a female Swordie. This knowledge was one that everyone knew. Because of this, the male members didn't want the Sabers to delegate this task to Kurou, a diminutive human.

"I am knowledgeable in some matters regarding the Swordies. You don't need to worry."

"Well then, try to put on a frightened expression as best as you can, human."

The criminal ringleader calmly waved around the sword with her hand, perhaps to add psychological pressure. The intensity of the light blade appeared to have increased. The so-called light blade technique was the emittance of light out of the body and transferring it to the sword. If a person didn't have the appropriate levels of light, it would be impossible to use this move.

The criminal ringleader casually walked towards Kurou. Even though this was underestimating her enemy , she still did not leave any openings exposed. Her eyes

were brimming with murderous intent as the tip of her sword flashed by.

A gust of wind blew over————causing a roaring sound.

The criminal ringleader's wielding of the sword violently stirred up the air————which caused a nearby concrete pillar to be splendidly sliced into two chunks.

Cutting this pillar, whose girth needed two arms to wrap around it, could never be accomplished by humans . She used superlative force, demonstrating the power and skill of the Swordies.

The criminal ringleader smiled. By deliberately chopping down the pillar, she probably wanted Kurou to coward in fear.

"....."

However, Kurou didn't flinch at all. He still maintained his sword in an upright position and never even moved his body.

"Hmph, what a grotesque little kid you are."

The criminal ringleader then shot out like an arrow, raising her sword once again.

Simply put, the Swordie's sword was both swift and thunderous as it came down at him. This blazing attack could slash apart anyone involved in the organization, crushing them into pieces. Then in a gruesome scene, that corpse would be turned into fine powder.

A Swordie's sword literally meant a one hit kill.

However, that was only if————they hit.

"......!?"

An impatient expression was clearly visible on the face of the criminal ringleader.

From the very first attempt, the criminal ringleader’s one hit killer sword strikes were completely evaded by Kurou.

In rapid succession, the blade, which was so sharp it easily cut through the air, came at Kurou's neck and chest at full force.

He did not initiate an attack, he only kept continuously dodging her attacks. Their blades never clashed either.

If a Swordie's sword were to clash with that of a human's, the human’s sword would be sent flying or perhaps the blade would be sundered. Which would it be .....

However, to be capable of continuously evading a Swordie's sword strikes and such, this was practically unbelievable for a human. Human eyes were unable to capture a Swordie's sword maneuvers, thus being unable to completely elude the strikes.

"What the heck you bastard! Just how can a human evade my sword!"

"Hehe, I'm not an alien though. Don't be holding any doubts during battle."

Kurou even wryly smiled. Even though the swings barely brushed past, to be able to see through those strikes that could cut through his entire flesh numerous times without giving off even a single drop of sweat was really quite exceptional.

"I think it's about time.....to make my move!"

For the first time Kurou took the initiative. Even though he went at blinding speed from a human's perspective, to a Swordie's dynamic strength it was ridiculously slow.

"Idiot.....!"

A smile even surfaced on the face of the criminal ringleader. Regardless if he were to cock the blade over his head or slash downwards, in her eyes it would all seem like a slow motion reflection.

However————

"What.....!?"

The moment Kurou swung his sword with all his might————

“W-What.....!?”

Her right hand was cut off from the base and blood began spurting out everywhere. The hand which had held the sword, fell to the ground. The shine of the light blade also vanished.

From the looks of it, her shock seemed to have surpassed her pain. She stared at Kurou without even covering her hand which was spraying out blood.

Compared to humans, a Swordie's physical capabilities were vastly superior. Even an injury of this extent wouldn't kill them. As long as a competent medic diagnosed them, the hand could be reattached.

"How could a human's sword.....I, that sword, what in the world was that!?"

"Starting from now, you'll have plenty of time to contemplate over this."

This criminal ringleader had slaughtered numerous Sabers and police members. Whether or not she should ever be allowed to step foot in this world again was questionable. There was probably plenty of time to ponder over this later.

"Eh?"

Kurou inadvertently tilted his head.

The right cuff of his long coat was severed. His expression indicated that this must have been the first time he failed in such a manner.

"Haha, this long coat is quite expensive. If they have to replace this long coat again, the boss will surely take a dig at me."

".....You bastard, that bracelet is——"

Due to Kurou's shirt cuffs being cut, the criminal ringleader directed her vision towards his wrist. Looped on there was a white metallic bracelet.

Engraved on the bracelet was an emblem consisting of a sword and the markings of a plant's vines.

"A Sword God's engraving! That's right, you are——it was mentioned that the Sword Saint accepted a disciple, that person is.....!"

"Sounds like you have a pretty good understanding. Well, this thing is just a decoration."

Kurou lightly stroked the bracelet.

Blademaster Hyouka————was the Swordie's strongest swordswoman and the mentor who taught Kurou his sword skills.

To Kurou, the fact that he will become the successor wasn't really a big deal.

"Kurou, it isn't over yet. This criminal ringleader is an extremely important battle asset to the Sun Cult. Since the Sun Cult intentionally sent her here, that must mean.. ...."

"Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Perhaps they even have a lot of accumulated treasure on them."

Kurou directed his vision to the van which still had its engine running. If only he had heard the conversation between the Sun Cult followers and the criminal ringleader, then he would have known what was stowed away in the van.

"Hey, one-million, what kind of cargo is in the van?"

"Do you think I'd give a damn about that?"

"I suppose so."

Even if the van was stuffed with suitcases full of money, the criminal ringleader probably couldn't care less. She was a being who only showed interest in a sword fight against Swordies.

Lars slowly approached the van.

Gripping the hilt of his sword, he suddenly pulled out his sword in a surprise attack. The sword struck countless times, leaving the backdoor of the van in pieces which were carried away by the wind. Even though he was a boy, a maneuver of this caliber was still extremely simple for any Swordie.

"Goodness gracious, can't you open it through normal means?"

"You never know what might be inside.....eh?"

Lars replied to Kurou's frustrated tone while gazing suspiciously at the inside of the van.

"What the heck, there's a person inside. Hey, please come out, we'll just let you go."

Lars stated something beyond expectations. It appears not only was there luggage, there seemed to be a Sun

Cult follower sitting there as well. In actuality, tonight's results with just the one criminal ringleader was more than enough.

"Hey, are you listening? You wouldn't want to be slaughtered by him."

In that instant————

The back of the van overflowed with a radiant light, blocking Kurou's vision.

This was different compared to the white light rays from a Swordie's light blade. What was emitted was a glorious golden color————

"Lars!"

When Kurou yelled out, Lars had already backed off from the van by a couple of meters. Since he was a Swordie and a member of the Sabers, he was extremely agile when dealing with abnormal situations.

Kurou redirected his gaze from Lars back to the van. Because the light pouring from the van was so

overwhelming, it was impossible to keep your eyes open. Despite this, having not felt any degree of heat was rather strange.

"What in the world.....?"

Under the glare, Kurou saw something unbelievable.

Coming out of the blinding light was a girl.

No wait, the girl was enveloped by the rays of light——————

She was about the same age as Kurou, somewhere between fifteen or sixteen years old.

She had long black hair, thoroughly pale skin, and a thin white dress.

Was she not wearing any undergarments? Those ample mounds that was her chest shook substantially with every step she took.

Furthermore, there was an awfully tacky set of handcuffs worn around those snappable looking thin hands.

The girl walked in front of Kurou without even a second thought.

"....."

The girl remained silent, extended her hands which were handcuffed, and unwaveringly stared into Kurou's eyes. Her expression never changed.

Without warning, the light vanished.

As he recovered his vision, the girl————gradually revealed a smile.

Kurou pretty much reflexively swung down with the sword he had drawn out from before.

A snapping sound was produced when the handcuffs lock got cut by the blade and was sent flying. Her arms, which now have regained their freedom, powerlessly drooped down.

"Ah....."

Just when the girl was about to say something, she trembled and collapsed. It happened so abruptly, like the severing of a thread.

Kurou instantly reacted by supporting her fallen over body. He carried her by her surprisingly skinny shoulders and hips which felt like they could be broken with the slightest impact.

What in the world was going on? What is the best course of action to take? Who is this teenage girl?

At his wit's end while holding on to the girl, Kurou was at a loss over what to do————

The Sabers' headquarters was constructed near the center of Tokyo Swordia within the Specialized Central Region.

In this center region, there were rows upon rows of towering ministry buildings and large businesses.

Situated within that area was the plainly designed ten-story building that was the Sabers' headquarters. The

Sabers was established five years ago when the terrorist activities of the Sun Cult started. Since the organization had not been around for that long, unfortunately the headquarters could only be constructed in this unadorned style due to the insufficient budget assigned.

A teenage figure showed up at the headquarter's entrance early in the morning. It was Kurou.

Only a few hours had passed since battling against the criminal ringleader. After the mission was over and the report documents were submitted, he went to a certain office in the Outer Human Region. Just when he was about to take a nap there, he was called over by headquarters.

As Kurou suppressed a yawn, he entered through the front doors.

Located in the main hall was the front desk with a female receptionist sitting idly by. There were also employees holding books while conversing and the cleaning staff tidying up.

Everyone in here was a Swordie. Not every Swordie made a living off wielding a sword. In fact, far more of them took on normal jobs instead.

Kurou, who was the only human within the building, was currently taking the elevator to the highest floor.

After Kurou stepped out of the elevator, he took a detour to the lounge before going to his destination. Inside there were numerous benches set side by side and a vending machine that dispenses drinks.

Once Kurou bought some juice from the vending machine, he stood in front of a window. All of the walls within the lounge were made into windows, allowing him to clearly see the situation outside the building. He was really fond of the scenery here.

Tokyo Swordia was established seventy years ago by the Swordies after the Great War.

The place was integrated as district 23 after the war——and was one of the eight districts of the Chiyoda ward. It was then changed once again into its current Specialized Central Region, a place that encompassed all political and economic functions.

There were also high-rise building areas within the Outer Human Region, but here the greenery was in copious amounts. It even felt like regardless where you

were, there would be an obsession to grow greenery in any bit of space that was present.

What could be considered as a thirst for forestation, appears to be some sort of homesickness.

The lush, beautiful, and vast world that was Swordia, was located in another world, one different from Earth. It was the homeworld of the Swordies.

It happened during the Second World War on Earth seventy years ago. At the time of the deadlock, right when each country's military strength began to dwindle ————the door was opened.

Within this world, who knows how many of those massive, bizarre doors, or portals rather, linking Earth and Swordia were opened. Swordia's massive army rushed through with one goal in mind and that was to invade.

Following that, the Great War changed in a way that humanity could never have predicted.

For the Swordies whose main weapon was the sword, everyone thought for sure they would be instantly slaughtered by the firearm equipped infantry, tanks, battleships, and aircraft.

However————that wasn't the case.

An abnormal atmosphere arose due to the influence of the massive portals. The earth's environment immediately turned chaotic as the skies and seas became turbulent. Not only were aircraft and battleships unable to move, each individual nation's front lines collapsed since sea, air, and ground transportation abilities were lost.

The Swordies were able to receive supplies from Swordia using their portals which spanned all over the world. Moreover, the elite Swordie troops were unfazed by this abnormal atmosphere.

What ensued was a wondrous sight————

The Swordie army achieved victory and every nation had no choice but to retreat their deployed armies.

The unthinkable had finally become a reality after the conclusion of the war. Although the reasons were quite unclear, after the Swordies claimed victory they instantly shut down all of their portals. Despite inhibiting the disruptive climate, the Swordies did lose their means of returning home.

The place that the Swordies then decided to settle on was————Japan.

When Swordie troops first appeared, it was during the end of the Great War. However, in the past there would be an extremely few number of Swordies who would occasionally arrive in Japan through tiny portals and associate with the people there.

They wanted to turn this country which they were familiar with into their new homeworld.

Following that, the Swordies were successful in placing Japan under their control after the country was weakened by the Great War. The Swordies then implemented a sweeping reform of the government structure and gained a foothold within the country.

Of course, it was an extremely chaotic period throughout this. The Japanese would revolt from time to time. There was even civil strife among the Swordies before the new government was established. However, this was quickly resolved within a short time frame――――

Upon achieving dominance over the country, the Swordies added the name of their already forsaken homeworld as their capital.

That was how Tokyo Swordia came to be.

Nevertheless, these facts were quite irrelevant to Kurou who was born in a distant time period from the war.

"Alright, time to go."

He left the lounge after he finished drinking his juice. Standing in front of the door that had the "head director" office sign hanging on it, he casually knocked on the door and stepped in without even waiting for a response.

"Pardon me."

There was already a guest in the head director's office.

Kurou apparently noticed the young female member as well. While sitting in front of the director's desk by the window, she was holding on to the report records while discussing some matters.

Kurou instantly noticed something.

The woman's hand was slightly shaking as she held on to the report. A dreaded look clearly surfaced on her face and even the sword by her waist was clattering. It was truly a pitiful sight.

In addition, leaning against the director's desk was a young woman. She was the boss of the public security force, although that title of hers didn't really match her ten year-old or so complexion. She continued to listen to the report without interrupting.

"————That's all for my report, Director."

"Very well, thank you."

The female member was startled upon hearing the director speak. She proceeded to deeply lower her head and rushed out of the room as if she was trying to escape.

Moreover, she ran right past Kurou like she didn't even notice him.

"......What's going on."

"Ah, you're here Kurou-kun, please come this way."

"Alright."

Kurou replied as such and stood in front of the desk.

At this time, a huge wave of pressure assaulted him.

It was as if his body was about to collapse from this sensation that seemed to be binded to his body. He was under the false perception that if this were to continue, his body would probably be crushed into pieces.

If the user was powerful, a Swordie's light could manifest in other physical forms instead of just the light blade.

The woman in front of him possessed light that had overwhelming power. The force could be felt just by standing around her. No one would blame them for being petrified in front of this female member.

Kurou gritted his teeth, stood up straight, and braced himself in face of this impalpable strength.

"You seem to have calmed down. Are you able to speak?"

Kurou lightly nodded.

Whenever anyone stood in front of the director it always turned out like this. For Kurou, as long as he readied himself he could retract the intimidation to a more manageable level.

"Anyhow, it's like people make me out to be a demonic boss considering how I cause everyone to tremble."

The director of the Sabers, Manaka, wryly smiled.

Manaka was a young woman who was twenty-four years-old.

Although the life span of a Swordie was quite similar to that of a human, they were able to delay the effects of aging since they were existences of light. There were many individuals capable of continuously maintaining a youthful appearance of around the age of twenty or so despite being already fifty years-old. Manaka looked like

she was only a teenager. This was most likely due to her powerful light force.

Her long blue hair was a rare occurrence even as a Swordie. Tied on both sides of her head were two delicate and inconspicuous ribbons, which suited her quite nicely.

She was wearing the female uniform of the Sabers. It was a black shirt paired with a tight-fitting mini-skirt and a simple suit. Under the suit, her white blouse stuck out at the chest region. As it turns out, her ample bosom was quite noticeable.

A strong willpower could be felt in her green eyes, neat appearance, and her well-proportioned stature. It would be fitting to say that Manaka was a splendid beauty.

However, if you were to judge her based on her appearance it could end up to be quite catastrophic.

Among the Swordies, there exists the Seven Swords who were deemed to be the strongest sword users.

Headed by the Sword Saint, the titles of the other members were the Sword Emperor, Kingsbrand,

Dragonblade, Sword General, Sword of Heaven, and Absolute Blade. The Swordies possessed these seven individuals.

Manaka was the director of the Sabers as well as the one who held the title of the Sword General out of the Seven Swords.

The overwhelming combat strength of the Seven Swords was capable of matching an entire army. In fact, the activity displayed by the Seven Swords during the Great War was incomparable. Even until now with the Seven Swords symbolizing the Swordie race, they were also authoritative figures reigning over all swordsmen.

"That said, there wasn't really anything that needed reporting early in the morning besides that tsujigiri[1] incident from before in the Outer Human Region."

"Yeah, I heard the rumors. It appears five or six people were already murdered."

Those murdered from the tsujigiri incident were all humans, therefore the criminal was most likely a Swordie. The Sabers had to take care of this incident, which was classified under terrorist activities. From the

looks of it, they have already dispatched many female members who were highly skilled in using a sword.

"Yes, that's exactly the incident's report. However, the full story still isn't clear to me————well that seems to be it. It's really troublesome to have made no progress in the middle of a case."

Manaka stated as such. She leaned her entire body against the back of a chair and remained silent.

"......Ummm Director, was there something you needed me to do?"

Kurou reluctantly spoke. To have called over someone specifically and then not say a word, this would be quite troubling to any recipient.

"You don't need to speak in such a reserved manner. It's quite displeasing."

"Even if you say so, you are still my superior."

"No need to worry. To me, you are just the disciple of my older sister."

"....."

Kurou's master was the Sword Saint and the Sword General was her younger sister.

In other words, the sisters ascended to the pinnacle of swordsmanship. Even though they were among Swordies, it was an exceedingly rare occurrence to see such an extraordinary sister pair.

"Kurou-kun, how's the job treating you? Have you already gotten the hang of things around here?"

"Just barely. It's still the same as before, just me working individually."

Kurou nonchalantly stated.

Just a moment ago, the female member's attitude exemplified Kurou's position within the Sabers.

What should be constituted as a Swordie-only public security force had a foreigner mixed in. Clearly a human, they felt awkward battling alongside someone like him, plus they were highly pretentious.

It wouldn't be wrong for Kurou to assume that all Sabers members were like this.

"Other than during a mission, no one will even talk to me except Lars."

"Well, Lars is the same. He would be perceived as unusual within this organization as well."

Manaka wryly smiled and shrugged.

"Even though it has been over a year, you still feel the same. Well, there are many Swordies with big egos around here."

Aren't you one of those Swordies too? Kurou snarkily thought to himself.

However, Manaka was also a pretty bizarre individual among the Swordies. She would have an indifferent expression in regards to her delicate position when dealing with Kurou. It was mainly due to her informal attitude, not just because she was his master's sister.

"That said, it's been a year.....starting from when my sister left here, a year has already passed."

"....."

Sword Saint Hyouka————her whereabouts became unknown a year ago.

Manaka became Kurou's new guardian after the Sword Saint left. Although he was within Swordie society, a minor still needed a guardian.

Except, Kurou never easily accepted having another person being his guardian. He decided to join the Sabers with Manaka for the sake of earning money to buy food.

No matter how capable a person was, there would be many obstacles for a human entering a Swordie organization. Because the Sabers was a young organization, there was enough flexibility to let Kurou enter the team. Of course, Manaka's mediation played a huge role as well.

"Well, regardless of what's going on with my sister, if it's her, she wouldn't lose her life to any accidents or things of that nature. Aside from that, let's get right to the main issue at hand."

"There's an issue?"

Kurou had just begun to think Manaka had called him over just to converse.

"Ah right, does it have anything to do with the girl from yesterday's situation?"

"Girl? What are you talking about?"

"......You should read the report once more. Although it's a hassle, I clearly documented it in there."

Yesterday night, a peculiar girl appeared from the Sun Cult's van.

After that, she was handed off to the other Sabers members that came over. Once the criminal ringleader was handed over as well, there was probably going to be a not so pleasant interrogation session awaiting her after she received treatment. However, the Sabers probably wouldn't do anything rash towards a defenseless girl.

"There was no way I was going to read the report that was just submitted yesterday. It's not my duty. Furthermore, I'm speaking to you as your guardian rather than as your superior. In other words, it's about your Dagger."

"The Dagger!"

The so-called Dagger was another name for a Swordie's ID. On the hilt, a special household emblem would be engraved on it. Until a Swordie was ready to assume personal responsibility, the Dagger would be entrusted to a guardian for the time being.

Out of Tokyo Swordia's ten million population, Swordies only make up ten percent of it. Although there was a degree of discrepancy among the Swordies, anyone could attain "nobility". This meant an increase in various privileges with respect to status and property. The Dagger symbolized this privileged social class.

"Kurou-kun is a Sabers member who records these incidents. Moreover, you possess the mark of being the Sword Saint's successor, something no one could have ever imagined. I would think the prerequisites for receiving the Dagger are more than fulfilled....."

"Is there still a problem then?"

Despite being a human, there was still the possibility of him obtaining a Swordie ID. Many decide to pay the huge sum of money to those who oversee the handling of

Daggers at the Emblem Management Institution, however there were exceptions.

Kurou, who displayed his mastery in swordsmanship and submitted an ID application form, was currently one of the exceptions.

"After all Kurou-kun, you haven't even received any formal compulsory education. For you to have received the basic rights of a city resident is already quite the accomplishment."

"......I suppose so."

It was pretty much a given that his master Hyouka's abilities in swordsmanship carried safeguards. Even within the Sword Saint's history, she was particularly outstanding.

However, her temperament was a bit of an issue. " Speaking of practice, we should live in seclusion deep in the mountains", she harbored these types of outdated methods. Just like that, she took her pupil away from the village and into the mountains to train. During that time, Kurou couldn't attend primary school or middle school.

"I understand where you're coming from.....ultimately, this is the course of action they want me to take."

"The Emblem Management Institution's verdict was very simple. They just want you to attain a Swordie's education."

"What!?"

"Today is April 25th. Even though the new school year has already begun, it should be no problem for the institution to turn a blind eye towards something of this magnitude. Starting today you'll be enrolled in a Swordie academy to attain your diploma."

"......!"

"Well, that's all I have to say. Good luck!"

Looks like there won't be any room for rebuttals.

However, Kurou had always aspired to attain his Dagger.

The nation was under Swordie control, that was the reality.

If he were to continue living here, Kurou would want to live a comfortable lifestyle.

Because of this, he decided to resume life among the Swordies.

The Sword Academy————

Although it was an academy for Swordie children, it had received much praise as a higher education institution by prestigious individuals.

Despite humans and Swordies being segregated into separate schools, the difference in their education system was quite minimal.

The Sword Academy was the equivalent of a high school in human society.

However, only those who were highly adaptable with a sword could enroll in the academy since there was more to the school than just academics.

For the sake of honing their swordsmanship, an optimal environment was created. This environment was known as the Sword Academy.

The academy was situated in the northwest section of Tokyo Swordia's Specialized Central Region, near the border to the Outer Human Region. There was a forest and numerous parks and such nearby. Plus, it was an extremely tranquil location.

The students were walking along the road to school quietly as they headed towards the school gates.

"Haa....."

Kurou sighed deeply as he arrived at the school gates.

Today he was not wearing his intimidating Sabers long coat, instead he was wearing a school uniform.

He wore a red tie at the collar of his beige suit.

Along with that, he also carried a heavy backpack filled with textbooks.

The tie hung all the way down to his waist and he also kept the scabbard to his sword suspended from his belt. However, there were no other students who carried a katana on them.

On the second day when Manaka called him over to headquarters, Kurou woke up early in the morning and hurriedly made his way to school.

Ever since yesterday, the days of fighting off terrorists were long gone. Now he was just a student. Although it was for obtaining his Dagger, to the working civilian, it did feel like a step backwards.

It was quite beyond expectations to be forced to enroll in the prestigious Sword Academy for his studies.

Even though Kurou felt he was being made a fool of by the people around him, there was no escape.

“Come on Kurou, put away that gloomy expression. Let’s get a move on.”

“.....Jeez.”

Kurou couldn't help but direct his focus onto Lars who patted him on the shoulders.

He was also the same, wearing the same Sword Academy uniform as Kurou. What was he thinking enrolling into the academy as well.

However, both of them were teenagers who would turn sixteen this year. It could be said that compared to getting in street fights every night, it would be more ordinary to go to school.

"The Sabers work wasn't so bad, but for it to be filled with so much killing is really quite a bummer————, if we're here, at least there are plenty of girls. You must actively look towards the future Kurou."

The Sword Academy was the Swordies' highest educational system standard. There were many outstanding fledgling swordswomen. A female becoming a swordswoman would of course be more outstanding so the student body was practically all girls. Despite there being a small population of guys studying there, they haven't seen a trace of their existence yet.

"You're right.....we should monopolize all the girls."

"You're getting way too ahead of yourself!"

Lars habitually replied with a snark remark towards Kurou's statement which completely revealed his desires . However, this portion of the conversation was clearly heard by the girls passing by.

The girls whispered amongst each other while coldly eyeing Kurou and Lars as they walked past them.

"Kurou, looks like we're not really welcomed here."

"That's always been the case for me."

Kurou referred to himself in this manner. It was true though, it has always been like this for him. Because of that, there was no point in minding such matters.

Moreover, it was just as Lars said, it probably felt pretty exciting to be in an environment filled with cute girls.

A commonly passed around rumor in Tokyo Swordia was that the female students of the Sword Academy

were all beautiful individuals. Although Kurou had never put in any effort to confirm this, it would seem the rumor was true.

The uniforms for the girls were the same as the guys in terms of the suit and tie. There was a discrepancy between grades though. The ties were split into three colors, red, green, and blue.

There were also some people who chose to wear a belt. However, since their swords were all kept away, none of the students carried a sword on them. It seems that even though it was a prestigious sword academy, most of the times the students would avoid carrying their sword within the school.

Kurou had visited other Swordie schools before. Seeing these otherworldly girls wear a tie to school was quite intriguing.

It was said that the other world where Swordies lived resembled medieval Europe.

The people would live in wood constructed houses and wear clothes made out of silk and linen. Their diet

was comprised of bread and soup and their means of transportation consisted of walking and horseback riding . Those in the upper class would ride in carriages.

Compared to earth, this kind of civilization lagged way behind.

However, after the Great War and gaining control of Japan, the Swordies adapted to and absorbed the cultures of earth at an alarming pace. In a sense, there was no moral integrity in the way they handled things.

The Swordies now live in reinforced concrete houses and wear clothes woven from chemical fibres. Whether it was Western food, Chinese food, or sushi, they would eat it all. Of course, they now drive cars, fly planes, and shop at convenience stores as well.

The girls at the Sword Academy wore beautiful ties. Their fair, succulent thighs were moderately exposed from the miniskirt.

Ignoring the rights or wrongs of the drastic cultural changes to the Swordies for now, to Kurou, he had no reason to shun Swordie girls.

"Alright Kurou, stop gazing and let's go. There will be countless girls for you to gaze at in the future."

"Alright."

Kurou nodded and walked through the school gates alongside Lars.

At the same time he offered a prayer in hopes that there will be much exhilaration awaiting him.

The classroom was silent.

"My name is Kurou. Although I transferred into this class at an odd time, please take good care of me."

In front of the blackboard, Kurou did his best to maintain a smile as he greeted the other students.

"....."

There was no response. All the students within the classroom remained quiet.

Kurou was not disheartened either. He sustained his smile and proceeded towards the designated seat the teacher assigned.

How troublesome, Kurou was seated in the middle of the classroom.

There were only girls around him. Furthermore, all the girls within his line of sight did not wish to even look in his direction. Rather, it felt as if the surrounding area was saturated with a subtle sense of tension.

Judging from the looks of it, everyone held a firm resolve to ignore Kurou.

Class immediately started as soon as the extracurricular activities ended.

The first period was mathematics. Even though Kurou had not gone to school before, he had at least learned basic math skills and such from his master. Despite this, he lacked confidence in himself when it came to understanding any mathematics related topics.

With this kind of tense environment, how could anyone even consider going to class.

"Haa——....."

In order to prevent anyone from hearing him sigh, he suddenly turned towards his side. Sitting alongside the window was the other male student, Lars.

Lars introduced himself in front of Kurou and the others. He did not receive any reactions either but he completely brushed that matter aside. Even right now he maintained that apathetic expression of his during this tense atmosphere as he looked out the window.

There was nothing Kurou could do about it. He could only try to bear through this sort of abnormal atmosphere.

Kurou understood that within the Sword Academy, which was comprised of many capable swordswomen, the other students would definitely not be receptive to the idea of a human being weaved in. That was because they already find Swordie men to be intolerable, yet Kurou was actually a notch lower than that————a human.

However, Kurou was already used to this type of response. He had been treated similarly while he was with the Sabers. That was why he showed hardly any interest for this current predicament.

With that said.....

"Ah."

The girl sitting in front of him dropped her eraser and the eraser bounced towards Kurou's seat.

"Hey, you dropped your————"

The moment Kurou was about to bend over to pick up the eraser, the girl sitting in front of him moved at a blinding speed. After she swiftly picked up her eraser, she returned her attention to the blackboard as if nothing happened.

"....."

Typical of Swordie girls————from the moment she took action to her expressionless demeanor, it was all done with breakneck speed.

Although Kurou was quite accepting of things up until now, he did feel a bit crestfallen.

To be openly rejected by girls of the same age clearly vexed him a great deal.

Moreover, the Sabers female members were practically all older than Kurou. Since he held little interest in older women, he was callous towards being ignored by them.

However, his interest spiked when it came to girls around his age. Plus, the girls in his class were all beauties. If possible, he wished to improve relations with them.

In spite of that, seeing the attitude the girl sitting in front of him had, he knew his chances of improving relations were slim.

Kurou once again heaved a sigh as he pondered.

At the very least, he felt that living a type of school life where he would not be shunned was pretty much out of the question.

“Haa~Haa”

Kurou had already lost count of how many times he sighed today.

Currently it was period three, sword class, during the first day of his transfer.

During the morning, the extracurricular activities along with period one mathematics and period two language class all came to a stagnant end. At the end of it all, Kurou became thoroughly isolated by the girls around him.

The Swordie students wouldn't even look him in the eye, even the teachers would only engage in formal conversations with him the entire time. Of course, the teachers were all Swordies.

All the girls would evade him as he walked along the hallways. Regardless of where he was, he always heard derisive words being spoken behind his back.

Apparently there was a large barrier between Swordies and humans.

"Oh my god."

As for his options, he could do nothing besides bemoan to himself as such. Since the class did not involve lectures, he figured there might be a change of pace during sword training. However, nothing exciting really came to fruition.

Sword training took place in a special classroom that differed from a gymnasium.

The girls wore an ordinary yet easily maneuverable attire that consisted of a t-shirt along with tight purple ballet pants while the guys wore t-shirts and shorts.

“However, the equipment we use is surprisingly rough.”

Kurou calmly waved the wooden blade around.

Sword training utilized wooden blades instead of the safer bamboo blades. It was known as a wooden sword to the Swordies.

A Swordie’s physique wasn’t as hard as iron but their light reinforced bodies practically received no damage

from bamboo swords. It seemed that wooden swords were incapable of delivering a fatal wound to them as well.

As a result, the students would use wooden swords in class.....

"I really wish they would step in the shoes of a human and rethink this. If I were to be struck by a heavy blow with a wooden sword I'd be dead."

"Well, isn't this for the sake of your goals? You can probably just endure that kind of thing for now."

Lars, who had his wooden sword rested on his shoulders, laughed as he spoke. He was unlike Kurou. Being a Swordie, he probably would not die from an attack by a wooden sword. Because of that, he appeared to be completely carefree.

"However, having this number of people wielding swords at once is really quite a sight."

Lars commented while looking at his surroundings.

Sword training comprised of two conjoined classes with about sixty students in total. The teacher who was

instructing everyone only occasionally stepped in. This training appeared to be just letting the students find their own mistakes while at the same time honing their own techniques. Besides Kurou and Lars, the other students found suitable sparring partners as they engaged in practice.

There was no one who feared practicing with a wooden sword. Every student gradually became well-versed in swordsmanship. This was quite understandable considering how outstanding the students who gathered at this school were.

"Hey, that kid doesn't seem to have a sparring partner."

"......!"

He searched left and right amongst the girls walking by. As soon as the girl realizes the person she was about to greet was Kurou, she would definitely make a lightning fast escape.

".....That's quite hurtful of you. That being said, do you think I'd be easily thrashed by her?"

"I'm not quite sure myself. However, your situation seems to have been spread around the school."

"What are you talking about? Where did you hear this news?"

Kurou sharply glared at Lars. Lars was always like this , doing this kind of stuff behind his back.

"From an active Sabers member. That's all that needs to be said right? However, these overconfident Swordie girls would probably hesitate as well if they knew you were the Sword Saint's pupil....."

"So you're saying there's no way they'd underestimate me."

Kurou directed his vision towards the Sword Saint's successor marking carved onto his bracelet.

Well, that was to be expected. Although he was a student, a human would just be seen as a weak existence in the eyes of the other students. However, if he was the Sword Saint's disciple, then it would be uncertain as to what his strength would be. Even if he were to lose, there would be nothing shameful about that.

"Even if you have no partners, as long as you come to class you will certainly find one eventually. Furthermore, the top five ranked first year students have the same Swordsman title as us. As for the upperclassmen, there seems to be a Sword Princess. Additionally, there appears to be classes where we combine with the upperclassmen. Perhaps we may get a chance to battle against the Sword Princess."

"The Sword Princess....."

As soon as a Swordie could assume responsibility in taking care of certain things, they would be able to attain the title of Swordsman. This was on record and was a qualification acknowledged by the country. It was pretty much all given at the discretion of the school teachers or mentors. There were many who attained the title by the age of 18. As long as you were a Swordie, this title was pretty much a given. With just the swordsman qualification, you could enlist in the army, become part of the Sabers, or qualify for any position that required wielding a sword.

The rank above a Swordsman was a Sword Princess. Only one out of ten thousand people could attain this title. They were guaranteed to be powerful. If it were one

of them, perhaps the Sword Saint's disciple would not instill any fear at all.

"That's right, it'd be pretty interesting if we could battle someone with the rank of Sword Princess!"

"I apologize for not being a Sword Princess, but if you'd be willing, I would like to be your opponent."

The class hushed down immediately.

A girl who wasn't in Kurou's classroom walked straight towards him. It must have been someone from a nearby class.

Her long and glamorous blonde hair was tied towards the left of her head, resembling what was known as a ponytail. Her facial features were extremely well-kept and those substantial eyes of hers exuded a fearsome willpower. The color of her eyes was sort of a blend between blue and emerald green————which formed a very lovely halcyon green hue.

This unimaginably cute and slender beauty was practically fairy-like.

The swells on her chest were enormous and their shape was quite satisfactory. She was snappily thin at the waist. Those legs of hers that were encased by those tight ballet pants were extremely soft, also her feet seemed pretty tiny.....

"Alright, very nice."

"What are you talking about?"

Towards Kurou thinking aloud to himself, the blonde girl sharply snapped back.

The girl's speech patterns possessed boy-like qualities.

"Ah, it's nothing. You want to be my opponent? In that case————

"P-Please hold a sec Sefi-sama."

Between the girl known as Sefi and Kurou, another girl came between them.

With an audaciously short haircut that practically left her forehead exposed, she was a truly vivacious girl.

"To think Sefi-sama would actually consider this thing as her opponent! This guy is a male human you know!"

"Referring to me as "this thing" is really disrespectful! I even feel like I'd turn into a coddling father!"

"As if I would care over such a thing!"

Kurou's rebuttal was instantly shot down by her one line.

"Y-Yeah that's right, no good will come out of this if your opponent is him....."

Another girl came forward and spoke with a weak voice. For Swordies, it was uncommon to see them wearing glasses like she was, plus she also kept her hair free flowing. However, this girl seemed to be a very well-behaved person.

"Let me take care of my own business. The two of you are to stay back."

"B-But Sefi-sama.....for the princess of the four generals and a human....."

"Quit your squabbling Neena. I won't forgive anyone who interferes, even if it's you."

Once she had reached this point, the one known as Neena finally backed off. At the same time, the girl with the short hair also parted a step back.

The so-called four generals referred to the four that commanded the Swordie army back during the Great War as well as their descendants.

These people became the ones with the most power within the Swordie government. Their positions only alternated with hereditary supercedings.

To sum it all up————Sefi, who was known as the princess of the four generals, could be considered as the one closest to the nation's highest status. Although she was only a student, her position did not allow her to play around with humans.

"I believe you said your name was Kurou. For now, I' m a Swordsman just like you. Perhaps it may be inadequate, but would you accept my battle invitation?"

"I'd be honored Princess-sama."

Kurou smiled as he nodded.

He placed his wooden sword in an upright position as he faced Sefi.

Sefi did the same and centered her sword upright as she attentively gazed at Kurou's eyes.

As soon as their sights were locked on to each other——

Sefi suddenly made the first move. Without any hesitation, she ferociously charged in.

During a Swordie competition, there did not exist a starting signal such as "ready, set, go". As soon as both felt the other was prepared, the competition would start right away. Before then, neither side would make a surprise attack.

Sefi swung her wooden sword straight down from above her head. Woosh, the sound of ruffled winds could be heard. The wooden sword winded forth with enormous momentum. Kurou only slightly stepped aside

to avoid Sefi's threatening first strike. That strike appeared to have enough power to blow someone away with just the ensuing wind pressure.

Sefi once again slightly readjusted the hilt of the sword , this time for a horizontal slice. Even this maneuver was dodged by Kurou as he leaned back. A fierce gale violently blew towards Kurou, kicking his hair up.

"Tch.....!"

A click of the tongue came from the girl's cute lips.

Sefi's sword once again whizzed by. Faced with this diagonal attack to his right, Kurou evaded with dance-esque movements. Afterwards, he readjusted his sword upright as if nothing happened.

"You're very capable Princess-sama."

"Are you taunting me?"

Sefi ruthlessly glanced over. Even that menacing expression was captivatingly cute. It was said that Swordie women were at the peak of their beauty during combat. The situation right now made that saying quite understandable.

"......!"

Confronted with another one of Sefi's attacks, Kurou once again dodged it.

There was already no leeway to be leisurely admiring her. Although he could maneuver around the lithe wooden sword like he had learned from practice, if a Swordie's force happened to impact him in the head for example, his skull would probably be shattered.

"How scary."

Kurou slightly grinned.

The sound of whispering by the other students around them could be heard.

"What do you think will happen?" "Sefi-sama is really giving it her all....." "That person would never take it easy on anyone." "Is that guy really a human?"

How frightening, Sefi’s abilities must be among the highest here yet she was unable to score a direct hit on a diminutive human. The students being at a loss for words was to be expected.

"......Hey, why aren't you attacking?"

Sefi muttered her obvious suspicion.

"I'm not looking down on you. As for my methods——————I don't think I'm required to say."

Kurou had positioned both his hands on the wooden sword before, but now he only had his right hand hold on to it.

Using an unhurried pace, he shifted around as he closed in on Sefi.

"......!"

Sefi shuffled back as if she was a little kid startled by the bark of a dog.

Regardless of that, once Kurou was at the appropriate distance, he firmly gripped the wooden sword and swung downwards. The people around him could clearly see the path of the sword.

However————————

"Guah!"

Sefi's wooden sword met Kurou's on impact————— snap, the portion of the wooden sword that came apart fell on the ground following that snapping sound.

".....I guess that's it. Thank you for your time Princess-sama."

"Wait, please wait a sec!"

Kurou did not respond to Sefi's holler. He turned around and marched off.

In front of him, Lars folded his arms and silently smiled. He saw through the whole thing.

"Princess-sama."

"W-What?"

Kurou suddenly stopped in his tracks and turned around.

Sefi was still holding on to the broken wooden sword, but for some reason her face was completely flushed red.

"Please battle with me again next time. No one else is willing to battle me."

“.....I don't want to.”

Sefi suddenly turned around. Her attitude was different compared to her threatening demeanor from before. This time she displayed a rather cute expression.

From the looks of things, regardless if she was the princess of the four generals or a wielder of a sword, she was still just a fifteen or sixteen year-old girl.

Kurou once again smiled as he walked off.

Within the showers, the sound of running water could be heard.

The scalding water ran down Sefi’s fair skin.

This was one of the girls dormitories within the Sword Academy. All of the dorms within the Sword Academy’s grounds were outfitted with showers, bathrooms, and even kitchens.

At the end of every day, Sefi would take a shower within the immaculate shower room. She seemed to enjoy the temperature of the burning hot water greatly.

However, despite taking a hot shower at the moment, she was not in the least jubilant. She was really down in the dumps right now.

"....."

As the warm water trickled down Sefi's head, she tightly bit her lips.

Everyone must have noticed————

Sefi recalled today's sword training.

"There's nothing you can do about the wooden swords breaking occasionally", her friends responded in this fashion.

However, despite everyone being a student, she was one of the select Swordie girls. There was no way she could have miscomprehended the situation.

The break in Sefi's wooden sword was definitely not by chance. It was purposefully fractured by that transfer student named Kurou.

But that wasn't all.

Sefi gave it her all in each of her sword maneuvers. The way she wielded her sword could have even killed Kurou. However, he completely dodged her moves with little difficulty————furthermore, she spared no effort in using her wooden sword to defend against a human's exceedingly torpid attack.

There was no doubt that the surrounding spectators viewed it like this.

Can't I win against him, it looks like————

Sefi clenched her first. She wanted to forcefully punch the wall within the shower room.....but she stopped herself right there.

Even if she destroyed the wall, the facts would still stay the same.

The fact that she had already lost.

"Haha, really now."

Sefi turned off the running water and walked out of the shower. Her long blonde hair swayed as she moved.

She boorishly wiped her hair and body with a towel and after putting on her white colored panties, she walked out of the shower room.

Despite the beads of water dripping onto the ground, Sefi did not mind in the least bit. She hurriedly marched off with just a towel wrapped around her shoulders. Due to her wealthy background, she would have servants waiting upon her at home. As a result, she wasn't too concerned with what she did.

Oh right, I guess I should do that.

Sefi suddenly recalled something.

Sefi had a routine of reading books for an hour before she went to sleep every day. Today should be no different. If there was the leisure time for it, her mood will most certainly improve. It would be best to go to sleep with a better state of mind.

With that said, time to make the preparations————

"Eh.....?"

After opening the door at the end of the hallway and entering the living room————Sefi became speechless.

"Oh.....Eh?"

"W-W-W-W-W-Wh.....Why are you....."

Kurou, who was sitting on the living room couch nonchalantly, caught sight of Sefi.

「え……？」
廊下の突き当たりでドアを開け、
リビングに入り――セフィは絶句した。
「よう……って、あれ？」
「な、なななななっ……なんで……」
くつろいだ様子でリビングのソファに座っているクロウと、
セフィの目が合った。
彼は、口をぽかーんと開き、あっけに取られているようだ。
セフィは舌をもつれさせながら、大きな目を見開いて
クロウを見つめ――不意に、自分の姿に気づいた。

His mouth was wide open and his eyes were locked in a stare. He seemed to be completely in shock.

As Sefi was rendered speechless, her eyes flickered as she gazed at Kurou————suddenly, she realized the current state of her body.

Other than the towel wrapped around her shoulders and her panties, she wasn't wearing anything else. Her naked appearance was completely exposed right in front of a boy————

"Kya————"

She wanted to lament but Sefi tried her best to endure this. She was absolutely prohibited from screaming at this time of day.

Sefi used her two hands to cover her body as she glared at the completely rigid Kurou.

"P-Please turn away! Can't you at least do that Rou!"

After Sefi walked out of the living room to change into her clothes in another room, she immediately came back.

This girl's dorm was pretty much like a high-scale apartment with additional rooms in it. It was very luxurious.

Sefi took a seat next to Kurou on the couch.

"Well Rou, what are you doing?"

"Trying to sneak into a girl's dorm!"

"Don't be so arrogant you pervert!"

Sefi glared at Kurou with an indignant expression. Kurou on the other hand merely spoke honestly knowing that whatever he was going to say couldn't distort the truth.

"Haa.....jeez, someone like you ought to……"

Sefi heavily sighed.

Her hair was tied into a ponytail. She wore a light pink sweater along with a black miniskirt.

"Why weren't you in your sleepwear? Then you wouldn't be all exposed."

"I don't have anything of the sort. Even if I did, I wouldn't wear it in front of outsiders!"

It was quite regrettable. Who would have thought that after taking a shower, someone would change back into daily attire and have people expect this sort of development.

"After seeing me like that.....you still wish to humiliate me!?"

"Wasn't it Princess-sama who provided me with this fanservice without my permission when I came here by chance?"

"It wasn't by chance! You clearly went overboard and snuck in, yet you're still saying things like that! Furthermore, please don't call me 'Princess-sama.'"

".....Understood, Sefi."

Kurou smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

After glaring at Kurou for a bit————Sefi chuckled.

"How many years has it been.....the last time we met was two years ago right?"

"It was 1 year, 311 days ago."

"That's way too accurately remembered! How despicable!"

Kurou thought to himself, "With that said, Sefi isn't the type to joke around with."

"You're always messing with people.....you were like this in the past as well."

"No, I'd say this aspect has taken a turn for the worse."

"Up to no good as usual!"

What Sefi had said was accurate.

Despite being the princess of the four generals, she was also a prestigious swordswoman————in fact, she was Kurou's friend from quite some time ago as well.

Ever since Kurou was a child, he would follow the Sword Saint deep into the mountains for days upon days of training. At times there would be guests visiting and Sefi was one of them.

More accurately, the one who had business with the Sword Saint was actually her sister. Sefi's sister, Silfi, was a friend of the Sword Saint and Sefi would follow her sister into the mountains in order to battle against Kurou.

Although there would only be a few encounters between them each year, Kurou and Sefi could be described as childhood friends. She probably felt the same way as well.

People would address the princess by honorific only. However, Kurou felt that their relationship was quite close considering she would call him by a pet name.

Even though someone had snuck into her room and despite being seen completely naked, she didn't alert anyone. From this vantage, the friendship between him and Sefi was clearly visible. A friendship that hasn't withered away even with the two year separation.

Of course, the two of them pretended not to know each other during class, but this was because they took each others' standing into consideration.

"Ha, I have so many things I want to say. However, you are really quite capable to be able to sneak in here. Tentatively, this dorm has security installations."

"I came in properly through the entrance as well as came into this room through the door. However, things like security cameras and locks don't really count as safety features to me. Sneaking into a dorm filled with fledgling Swordie swordswomen isn't really that hard."

"That's because you came to my place.....other than swordsmanship, you still have this despicable skill."

Confronted with Sefi, who was at wit's end, Kurou only lightly chuckled and then stayed silent.

Sneaking into buildings was something taught to him while he was with the Sabers. Because that wasn't an ability to be proud of, Kurou wished to put an end to this topic.

"Anyways, why did you come to our school Rou——————"

"Umm."

As Sefi underwent a change of mood when she asked, Kurou's tummy growled.

"Ah hehe, it's because I needed to test my intrusion plan. That's why I haven't eaten anything today."

".....You're really a handful. What am I supposed to do with you."

With a hopeless expression, Sefi shook her head. Ever since just a moment ago, she had maintained a despairing look.

"Oh yeah, now is the perfect time to do that."

"That?"

"Yup, doing this for just one person isn't really feasible but if it's Rou then it'd be perfect. After sneaking inside a girl's room, you don't really have the right to complain."

"H-Ha....."

That, what was she referring to?

While Kurou was distressing over this, there was nothing he could do against Sefi inching her face closer to him, perhaps due to his fear.

"Ah Sefi.....surely it isn't, who would have thought you could do this kind of thing."

Kurou sighed.

Although it was said that girls could undergo drastic changes within a short time frame, who would have known that Sefi had reached techniques of this magnitude.

"Oh it's nothing really, but I suppose it isn't too shabby right? Oh, what's with that gratified expression of yours.. ...."

Sefi revealed a flirtatious smile.

Even though that typical stern expression of hers was quite nice, the expression just now really suited Sefi. Normally, there would definitely be somewhat of a childish complexion on her but right now she possessed the look of a mature adult. Women were really quite intimidating because of this.

"But you're really capable.....Sefi. For it to be this tasty , it really is quite unbelieveable."

"Oh really, the ingredients are of the highest quality."

"Haha, highest quality eh."

Kurou smiled as he stuffed two onigiris into his mouth .

There was a table by the couch where the two were sitting. On top of it were some onigiris, a full bowl of minced meat soup made out of pork and vegetables, soft and sweet scrambled eggs, as well as cold vegetables topped with dressing.

These were all prepared by Sefi. Ever since she was young, she had always shown interest in cooking. Kurou couldn't even keep count of how many times she would treat him to her cooking. Compared to two years ago, her technique had improved substantially.

"However, I'd be screwed if people here found out that I was cooking. People associated with the four generals shouldn't be cooking and such. This is supposedly a servant's task————getting taught in these matters was particularly troublesome. In my old

house, although I would secretly discuss cooking topics with the maids I had good relations with, we would never touch upon actual cooking. Rather, we would use " that" as a secret signal for substituting out words."

So this secret signal really did have some sort of profound meaning behind it. Kurou snarked to himself.

"Hmm? In that case, you didn't bring any servants with you? If it's just one person living within a dorm, you should be permitted to bring servants right?"

The children of many prestigious households were within the Sword Academy. As a result, there was this rule in place.

The people who worked the kitchens here were most likely servants brought along from the student's household.

"It'd be much more peaceful if I stayed here by myself. I'd only have the household maids bring over some ingredients since I can't even go out to buy that kind of stuff."

"What a troublesome life."

The life of the princess of the four generals seems to be filled with hardship.

"Well, there's nothing I can do about this. You can't change a person's background no matter what you do. With that said, what about you Kurou? Let me hear about the details of your circumstance."

"I have already mentioned it before though."

Kurou gulped down some of the minced meat soup.

When Sefi was preparing her dishes, Kurou practically recounted the entire process of enrolling into the Sword Academy. However, beyond that he didn't give much of an explanation for it.

"During this two year period I haven't heard anything about you. Although I do know that the Sword Saint's whereabouts became unknown.....you holding up ok?"

"It's been fine for the most part. Even though master was a strange person, she is very famous. To have accepted a human as a disciple and along with her disappearance, no one should be too surprised."

"Ah, I see....."

"I don't have a problem with it either. The training was pretty much over anyways."

Kuro gently rubbed the bracelet under the cuff of his uniform. Since the continual training, he had received the mark of a successor after being confirmed as one of the candidates to be the next Sword Saint.

"However, is that fine with you? As long as Kurou still has the successor's mark, there probably aren't many people who can take responsibility for you."

"To become one of the symbolic Seven Swords of the Swordies, and having the most powerful throne being passed down to a human? Most of those with power would find it inconceivable. If only I could carefully request my master once she comes back to remove the successor's mark."

"Does Rou feel as if this is the best solution?"

"There's nothing good or bad about it."

Kurou revealed an anguished smile.

"My hope is to receive my Dagger after graduation and work for the Sabers or some place like that. Then I want to construct my own house and settle down with a family. That's all there is to it."

"…….Kurou, you haven't changed one bit. Always so down-to-earth."

Sefi revealed an unspeakably subtle expression.

She understood Kurou didn't have any wild ambitions . She also knew he wasn't really obsessed with swords. Although that wasn't really a positive thing in her opinion……

"However, I can't say for sure that is my path either."

"……"

Once again, Sefi clearly revealed a dejected expression.

The so-called princess of the four generals was Tokyo Swordia's highest position, which belonged to Sefi.

Despite being a human, Kurou decided to live among the Swordies.

Therefore the two of them being depressed was sort of understandable. However, at least Sefi had a decent amount of freedom and she seemed to feel guilty about this.

"I'm sorry Sefi."

"Eh?"

Sefi was surprised at what Kurou said.

"I shouldn't be going easy during sword training anymore. However, I can't really say I was just playing around but perhaps there was the intention to mess around for a bit at the time. It's been a long time since I've gotten the chance to fight against Sefi, I almost didn't want it to end. No wait, this description doesn't quite suit it either....."

".....You——idiot, I know I can't win against Kurou. We battled together countless times before, I already knew there was no way to catch up to you during that two year gap."

Sefi was very strong, but she was also quite straightforward.

Although she wasn't willing to admit defeat, she did possess an objective reasoning in understanding the truth . Regardless of it being from a swordsman or a normal person, this was a positive quality to have. Kurou really liked this about her.

"Could it be that you came here just to talk about this? Even after you teased me like that, you still wish to disgrace me....."

"Based on your attitude, you must be extremely angry right?"

"Of course. In my mind, I've already killed Kurou ten times."

"At the very least control that number."

"However, the wooden sword broke because I was weaker than Rou. I'm angry mostly at myself having easily lost like that."

Sefi tightly clenched her fist.

Seeing her like this, Kurou suddenly got in front of her .

When Kurou and Sefi first met, they were only ten years-old. By that time Kurou had already been training with the Sword Saint for four years.

If it was a Swordie girl of the same age, there was no way he would lose. Due to the Sword Saint's nightmarish training, he had already attained such finesse.

Every time Sefi lost to Kurou, she would clench her fists and pound the ground. Despite being just a kid, attacking the ground with the arm strength of a Swordie resulted in the ground caving in which led to Kurou shaking in fear. As a human, if he was hit with that kind of force then he would probably die with one hit.

Kurou would put his life at stake during training and the primary reason for that was probably because of Sefi.

".....What are you doing staring at me with such a stupid expression?"

"Ah, no....."

Kurou dubiously smiled and extended his hand towards Sefi————

"Sefi has grown up quite a bit."

“.....!?”

Sefi, whose breasts were suddenly groped by Kurou, trembled all over. Following that she scooted to the edge of the couch.

“W-What are you trying to do.....!?”

“W-What’s going on.....!?”

Due to the soft texture coming from within the sweater , Kurou could not help but feel astonished.

No way, this kind of thing was.....

“Why would Rou be surprised!? What the heck are you trying to do to me!?”

“It’s just that it felt bigger than it looked.....perhaps it’s because the way I touch them is different from before.”

“What in the world are you calmly analysing!?”

Sefi shouted as she used her hands to cover her chest.

“However, it appears that you are wearing something underneath your sweater. If you were to wear even less, that’d be much more exciting.”

"You've already felt a girl's chest, yet you still complain!"

"Didn't Sefi mention this before? 'If there is a weakness then go all out fufufu.'"

"That's something I said when I was young! There was no intention to have my body felt! And what's with the " fufufu", no way I would've said something like that."

"No, you did say it before."

"Eh, really?"

Sefi was dumbfounded.

Her tone actually felt quite languid. At times she would even speak in a frivolous manner but she would never notice it herself. Perhaps the latter might have influenced Kurou.

"Nevertheless, Sefi's all grown up. Perhaps your figure will turn out to be quite splendid."

"This conversation is quite obscene, please stop. Although, that means Kurou hasn't matured yet.....this kind of sexual harassment.....we aren't at the age where we can just joke around like that anymore."

"Yes I know."

Kurou smiled as he nodded. He ate an onigiri, finished up the minced meat soup, and after he finished up the rest of the cooked dishes, he lifted Sefi's skirt.

"Didn't I just say this before? What are you trying to do now!?"

Kurou nimbly ran away from Sefi who stood up in anger. The glimpse of her white panties was now deeply ingrained in his mind.

"Ah, I'm sorry. It's just that when I see Sefi I start boiling with lust."

"Eh, um, so it's like that. If that's the case then I guess it can't be helped....."

"....."

Quite an unexpected reaction.

Of course, Kurou had planned on joking around a bit but who would have thought that this would become a reason for forgiveness.....it was probably because he showed admiration towards her charms by saying it excited him.

“Eh, hold on a sec! I had just told you to stop openly engaging in sexual harassment! That said, your insanity is already on another level!”

Sefi seems to have finally caught on to Kurou’s false reasoning. If that wasn’t the case then perhaps even Kurou would have felt there was a bit of wrongdoing.

“If it’s here then it doesn’t matter, just don’t do this type of thing outside. As the number three ranked student in swordsmanship, if my skirt were to be lifted in front of everyone then————”

“Haha, compared to your family history, Sefi is even more into swords.....eh, did you say number three?”

“Yup, but that’s just my placement during the entrance exam. There are still two students placed above me.”

"Ah."

He had guessed that among the people he saw during sword training, none of them possessed swordsmanship that surpassed Sefi's. Although two classes were conjoined, since there were only ten class groups for year one students they must have been in the other grades.

"However, for Sefi's abilities to only be placed as third!"

"For the time being....."

Kurou tilted his head slightly.

Sefi's tone of voice was a bit ambiguous as if she harbored some sort of grudge.

"What's wrong? Was there some favoritism during the examination?"

"N-No it's not like that. To lose means I was weak. Since next time there will be an elimination tournament for the school, I'll avenge myself then."

"Hoho, an elimination tournament?"

Having heard some explanations regarding the school activities from the schoolteachers, there seems to be multiple elimination tournaments held to determine the standings for the Sword Academy.

"So what you're saying is I have to participate as well?"

"Of course. All of the students are forced to participate. Even though there is a test, a poor result in the elimination tournament will get you removed from school."

This was probably Sefi warning him not to take it easy. Because Kurou only wanted to graduate, he wasn't really too focused on earning a high grade.

"However, Rou will probably win. At the very least, I can't beat you."

"....."

Sefi displayed a subtle sign of dispiritedness.

"Even though you are just joking around, other than you, no other boy would be able to sexually harass me since I'd be able to snap their arms off before they could even touch me."

"That sounds quite scary."

"Humans seem to think that all Swordies can do is just put their strength behind wielding a sword, but that isn't the case. The sword is a much finer piece of equipment."

Sefi swiftly extended out her right hand.

"The enemy's vision along with the minute quivering of their body, their breathing motion, and the sound of their joints, all of the five senses must be used to respond to the enemy and judge their movements. However, I can 't predict Rou's movements. By the time I notice them, I' ve already been sexually harassed."

"Very powerful words there."

"There's probably no other way to put it. For now, Rou can do whatever he wants since I can't stop you. From

lifting up my skirt to wielding that wooden sword against me, it's almost as if you could do it in your sleep. ”

“These are old-school techniques, haven't you already seen them multiple times?”

“No matter how many times I see them, even after having you explain to me I still can't prevent it from happening. It's really quite unbelievable.”

Sefi did not seem to be reprimanding Kurou, nor was she unwilling.

She simply believed that Kurou was an inconceivable person.

“.....No, there's no point in even interrogating Rou in regards to this aspect. Oh well.”

Sefi wryly smiled as she shook her head.

“It would be really helpful if you could manage that. Well then, I should probably get going. Thanks for your hospitality, the taste was delicious.”

“Umm, Rou.”

Just as Kurou was about to step out of the window, he stopped.

"Be careful. There's going to be a lot of trouble awaiting you in the future since there are maniacs encamped here who put their lives on the line wielding their swords. Even though you are prohibited from pulling out your sword within the school————— everyone still carries their sword regardless."

Other than sword training, there was no need to carry a sword within school. However, since there was also class practice with real swords, the students would leave their swords in their rooms or a cabinet within school. If a sword was required, it seems they would carry their swords on them.

"No matter what, in here you are considered an outsider Rou. Although no one would blindly attack you, within this blood boiling age group, there will be times where you'll be rendered helpless in some situations if it' s just you by yourself regardless of how strong you are."

"Well, I'll keep that in mind."

He already clearly understood that his own school completely rejected him. There were many who were spiteful towards him just because he was a human and thus it's understandable that some of them might try to do something provocative.

"Then I guess I'll have to try my best to protect my life during these three years. As compensation, I'll have to take Sefi's bra or panties.....would that be alright....."

"No....."

"Is that so....."

Although they were childhood friends, there appear to be limits as to how far one can go.

From another person's perspective, this kind of conversation would probably seem way too puerile.

"Goodnight Sefi."

"Goodnight."

Sefi gently smiled after replying to Kurou.

Kurou exited through the window. Even though Sefi's room was on the third floor, it was easy to descend from for someone as capable as Kurou.

He climbed down the walls in a manner akin to that of a ninja and having witnessed Sefi's gentle smile, he felt a warm feeling in his chest.

It was currently the early morning of the next day.

Kurou yawned as he passed through the school gates.

By the way, the academy did not require all students to live within the dormitories. As a result, Kurou came to school from his house.

Although it was mentioned as his house, it was actually just the Sabers's lounge that he had moved into without permission. Since the head director was his guardian, there were no complaints over this. He only had a bed within the narrow room, but at least the time it takes for him to walk from his workplace did not even

add up to a minute. In addition, he saves himself from paying for room and board which made Kurou extremely jubilant.

Actually, Kurou kept himself as a Sabers member even up till now. Despite his pay being reduced, he was at least making money. Manaka did let Kurou go to school, however she probably didn't plan on him continuing to work. Although Kurou did need to pay for living expenses, he was rarely seen staying with the group.

Kurou paid no heed to his surroundings as he leisurely entered the campus.

"Let me help you carry your backpack."

"Haha, there's no need."

Just as he was about to head to the stair entrance on his way to class after putting away his backpack.....

".....Hold on!"

"Hmmm?"

The girl tilted her head slightly.

The girl who offered to help carry Kurou's backpack closely tailed him.

"What's wrong with you? Why did you suddenly take my backpack!?"

"It's because this is my job."

The girl was expressionless in her reply.

She wore a black and green maid outfit along with a white katyusha on her long hair. Even though her outfit was extremely gorgeous, she did give off an impression of being very delicate.

"Hey, are you....."

"Hmm?"

"Aren't you the girl who appeared from the back of the Sun Cult's vehicle.....?

"That's right. What about it?"

The girl still showed no expression at all.

"What do you mean what about it! This can't be right, why are you here!?"

"Haha, I forgot. I should have said this from the start."

The girl remained stoic as she spoke and when she was done speaking, she kneeled down.

Kurou didn't even have time to stop her. The girl placed both her hands on the floor and deeply bowed her head.

"My name is Sakurai Hinako. Starting today————I'll be serving you."

Since she lowered her head so deeply, her expression wasn't visible.

However, if she was joking around, this would be quite over the top. For a girl to be wearing such an eye-catching outfit, there was no way she should have been permitted to enter school grounds.

Kurou gazed intently at the black hair of the girl who still had her head lowered like this.

It appears that she wasn't going to lift her head up unless Kurou told her to. The girl remained motionless.

Turning a blind eye towards this would seem optimal, even Kurou was contemplating this unfavorable course of action.

However, Kurou already realized that there was no way he could brush aside this girl. He also recognized that this was just the beginning of his troubles.

Chapter 2 - Maiden of the Sun

Kurou dragged the maid outfit wearing girl by the hand and led her into the depths of the school.

Once there, no other figures were in sight. Interrogating the baffling girl in a place like this seemed profoundly fitting.

“So what’s with all this?”

The girl known as Hinako kept her back against the wall and raised her head as she blankly looked towards Kurou. If other people were to witness this, they may misconstrue this as Kurou coercing a girl. However, regardless of how other people viewed him, Kurou could not even comprehend what was going on himself.

“These were my orders, to serve you starting today. That’s why I came here.”

“Serving me.....who ordered you to do so?”

“That’s not an issue at the moment.”

“It’s a huge issue!”

Does this girl even know what she is talking about?

During that one night while attacking the Sun Cultists, her appearance was indeed very bizarre.

No, this was perhaps not on outlandish levels.

That was because the mysterious light phenomenon wasn't something that could be just promptly understood. As a result, he just forgot about it after writing the report, yet.....

"Anyways, I'll be working for you. Anything outside of that isn't my problem."

"So extreme....."

Kurou weakly muttered. Following that, he sensed that class was about to start. There was no time to be engaging in nugatory disputes with this uncanny girl.

"Let me confirm something first. You're a human right ?"

"Well, I believe so."

Although it was an amusing reply, Kurou was nearly certain that was the case. This girl appeared to be very feeble, completely different from a Swordie.

"Even though I have no idea what's going on, you might as well go back. Other than humans who stroll around here working as servants, anyone else would be driven out."

Within the academy, there was quite a large group of humans. They were not students or teachers but rather servants.

Other than the people employed here or those taking care of miscellaneous tasks within the school, the servants brought along by the students were largely comprised of humans as well.

Despite the academy disallowing humans from enrolling into the school as students, it was ok for them to be at the campus if it was purely work related.

However, if a human did not possess a permit to enter the Swordie school, things would inevitably get chancy.

"It's fine, I already have a permit."

"Huh? Where did you get it.....hmm?"

Kurou suddenly turned around.

There were several colossal trees planted there. Just as Kurou was scrutinizing one of them————

"As expected of Kurou, you're quite sharp."

"It's easy to detect your aura. Do you get that often?"

Lars walked out from behind the tree. He was wearing his school uniform and carried his sword by his waist just like Kurou.

"Was it you that brought her along?"

"All I did was lead her here. Afterwards I handed her over to you. Like raising kids, as long as they can work for you it should be fine."

"No no, suddenly bringing up servicing or being serviced is too out of the ordinary! I don't have the money to employ a servant!"

"Is the issue money? Well, I believe this aspect has already been taken care of! It's because of————the director."

"So this stunt was her doing!"

Thinking about it for a second, there was no one else who was capable of meddling to this extent.

"It's still quite perplexing why she'd tend to the money related problems behind my back. What the heck is going on, explain yourself."

"There's really no other way it seems."

After Lars took a glimpse at Hinako, he urged Kurou to move to somewhere else in order to get some separation from her.

Following that, he gave a run-down of the situation with a nonchalant tone.

Lars was most likely called to headquarters early in the morning by Manaka. Once there, he encountered this maid attire wearing girl and was imparted with all the details.

"She's————the cult founder's daughter."

"Daughter? You mean there's a founder or something within the Sun Cult?"

Although the people the Sabers suppressed were practically all followers of the sun, Kurou had limited knowledge about their higher-ups. What he did know was only the cult's battle strength————equipment, and battling personnel count.

"Well, I guess a founder probably does exist. Story has it that it's been over ten years since he last publicly appeared. However, the Sabers did receive reports indicating the cult founder has a daughter. Since DNA confirmation was not utilized, we don't know whether or not she really is a legitimate daughter of his but she did say so herself."

"Herself————sounds quite suspicious. We still don 't even know what she may be plotting."

Hinako seemed to be completely uninterested in Kurou's conversation as she leaned against the wall and

leisurely stared into the sky. No matter how one looked at it, she did not resemble any of the dangerous Sun Cultists.

"That girl seems to be harboring some secrets. At the very least, she doesn't seem to be the cult founder's daughter, having not been placed on that high of a pedestal."

"I agree."

If she was a human who was influenced by the Sun Cult to oppose Swordies, then she probably would not have been inserted into a school filled with them. At the very least, she wouldn't have shown up early in the morning wearing a maid outfit.

"Except, the so-called daughter of the cult founder isn't a known truth. It's a matter still under investigation. What is known is that the Sun Cult members seemed to be very focused on her, this is without a doubt. During that night, the Sun Cult's movements appeared to be very flurried. Even that secretive criminal ringleader made her move. We questioned the apprehended Sun Cult followers numerous times, they appeared to have been ordered to 'retrieve the package.'"

"That package probably referred to the girl. If she is the cult founder's daughter, presumably that was a huge event back then....."

"Besides, even if that Hinako girl is really the cult founder's daughter, there doesn't seem to be a trace of criminal activity linked to her. Even if she was a follower of the sun, as long as she's just a believer, there's nothing wrong with that."

"Hmm....."

Just like Lars said, the Sun Cult itself didn't face restrictions from the law.

In the words of the Swordies, they were just a group of people with extremist values.....

"When facing opponents who carry weapons, we Swordies will show no mercy in routing them. However, one of our rules is that we don't harm those who don't carry weapons. In short, it's just the cultists who are armed.

"What a peculiar group of people."

Kurou wryly smiled.

Even seventy years ago when the Swordies fought against humans during the Great War, the Swordies would not attack civilians. Especially those who were defenseless, they definitely would not have crossed swords with them.

It could be said that this was one of the restraints of a Swordie swordsman. Even if they strongly detested the opponent, they would not attack someone that was defenseless. What an extreme moral idiosyncrasy.

“However, Kurou wants to add himself to this group of bizarre individuals right? Thus, take her as your maid! ”

“Well.....wait, I need to attain a Swordie ID, what does having her be my maid have anything to do with that!?”

Kurou couldn’t help but shake his head towards Lars’s enthusiastic urging.

Kurou wished to protect Hinako, that was all. Anything after that should be dealt with by the upper management of the Sabers. Basically, handling this fell on Manaka and the others.

"However, even the Sabers would have a hard time dealing with a child. She may be the cult founder's daughter, but there's no reason to arrest her because she isn't a criminal. That said, we could fabricate an accusation but for it to be something done by a girl like her, there's no way something like that would pass. Nevertheless, if we were to leave her alone then.....hence , it was determined that she would be handed off to Kurou."

"What an absurd leap of judgment!"

Why was there a girl with such a problematic standing , so much so that she was strongly forced onto the hands of a normal member like Kurou.

"Furthermore, humans can live normally within the academy so her guise is quite well-done. That said, her identity may lead to some trouble but as long as Kurou is around, no matter what happens she should be fine right ?"

"So you're saying for me to become her bodyguard and guardian?"

"Kurou is also about to receive his pay from the Sabers so you can't decline. This is an order――――I believe that was what the director had said."

".....Damn it."

Kurou seemed to have no room to voice complaints once again.

Indeed, even if he had already earned his money, Manaka's orders were final. In addition, if he loses his earnings from the Sabers, then there would be no way for him to maintain life down the road. Although his current gains from reward money were kept in his savings, he didn't want the path to a steady future to be discontinued.

"Well then, good luck Kurou."

Lars stated as he was beaming with excitement.

The Sword Academy covered a lot of ground. There were numerous facilities and it even had a courtyard constructed.

In accordance with the Swordie's love for greenery, countless plants were planted within the courtyard. Throughout the year, there would be flowers embellishing the flower terraces and very beautifully well-kept grass fields.

In one of the corners of the gorgeous, vast courtyard sits a small piece of forest. Within the forest was a small wooden hut.

"Is this the place....."

Kurou stopped in his tracks. He lifted his head and gazed attentively at the small hut. Lars and Hinako did the same.

The person who constructed this courtyard was a human landscaper. In hopes of taking care of the landscaper, the school prepared a small hut for him.

That landscaper passed away a couple years ago and since the current landscaper was away on official business, there was no one else living here.

“So I’m suppose to live in this comfortable room?”

Kurou harshly glared at Lars who was explaining things nonstop.

“Pretty much. A couple of the higher-ups even wanted her to be placed under house arrest within this academy.”

If it was house arrest, then this facility would probably be even more suitable————Although they figured it was just going to be Kurou by himself, the entire Saber’s upper management still completely shifted this task to Kurou.

“Well then, I’ll leave the rest to the two of you.”

“Wait Lars, where are you going?”

Kurou grabbed Lars as he was about to leave.

"I'm going to school of course. First period has already started, if I don't leave now....."

"So you're seriously going to leave all the troublesome matters to me....."

"I've been told by my parents that I have to graduate. Well, it is what it is."

After giving a slight smirk, Lars left without further interruptions.

Since Kurou understood that what Lars said about his parents was true, it was hard to keep him here.

".....There's really no other way."

Kurou muttered and proceeded to open the door to the hut using the key Lars gave him.

The interior setup was in a Japanese style. After removing his shoes, he entered inside and thoroughly scoped out the place.

There was an eight tatami living room along with another six tatami Western style room. There was also a

conveniently placed kitchen, shower room, and bathroom. Even though from the outside it looked like an outdated tiny hut, the inside decor was exceptionally well adorned.

There was a TV, fridge, and what appeared to be a washing machine. Other things such as tables and chairs were already available. The preposterous sense that this place was not inhabitable was completely absent. It was probably because there was someone who would tidy up around here on occasion.

"Well, living here doesn't seem too bad. Walking to school only takes five minutes and the facilities here are quite complete."

According to what Lars said, there was no need for room and board. It seems even the electricity and gas costs were already covered by the school.

To Kurou, it did not seem that bad.

"Ha——, so this is a tatami. It's my first time seeing one."

"....."

Hinako took a seat in the living room and affectionately stroked the tatami mat.

It wasn't that bad but————that was with the prerequisite that this annoying girl wasn't living here as well.

Except, if protecting her was part of the objective, then there was nothing he could do about it. Kurou had already come to accept this worst case scenario.

"I believe I haven't made a proper introduction. My name is Kurou."

"Kuro?"

"Well the sounding is a bit off.....whatever, it's fine."

"Are you a human? You're different than the Swordies , do you have a surname?"

"Yes I do. My original name was Katsuragi Kurou. However, if I were to live within Swordie society, there's no need for a surname."

"So it's like that."

Hinako seems to have understood and nodded.

“By the way Kuro!”

“Calling me by my name directly already? Whatever, what’s the matter?”

“What should I be doing?”

“.....”

Regarding this matter, it was something Kurou really wanted to inquire from her instead.

She obviously dressed up in maid attire and told him that she would serve him. However, he didn’t actually know what in particular she should do.

“.....For now, just stand up.”

“Right.”

Hinako mannerly nodded and stood up. Kurou once again inspected her.

Her body was extremely petite, approximately 150 centimeters tall. Her hands, legs, and even her waist

were slender to the point of seeming unstable. However, there were two massive bulges coming from her chest.

It was probably because that green and black colored maid outfit was quite exposing around the chest. That captivating deep ravine was pretty visible. The skirt was short, as if it was meant to be worn while in combat. It would seem that if there was even the tiniest of movements, her panties would be exposed.

However, did she not have any thoughts at all about this maid outfit seeing as she was completely unprepared for this.

"....."

Kurou couldn't help but think who was the one that picked this outfit.

No, it should be obvious. It was the one who sent Hinako here————in other words, Manaka. She was someone who kept up with fashion trends. Within the Sabers, her uniforms were always accompanied by a beautiful overcoat stemmed from her interest in these matters.

In the end, if he were to become Hinako's bodyguard, then there was no need to call Lars in. Calling for himself instead would most likely be a much better option. Instead, she specifically sent Hinako over to the academy thinking this would perhaps be much more interesting.

"About how old are you? What's your age?"

"I'm 15, turning 16 this year."

In other words, the same age as Kurou.

There was really no choice but to live with a beauty around the same age under the same roof.....of course, if it was a mission then there was no way he would try anything unreasonable.

".....Well, whatever. For now just tidy up the place a bit. Seems like there's plenty of dust around here. Since there's a lot of useless stuff piled up in that room, I'll go ahead and straighten things out over there."

Kurou decided to first clean up the stuff he saw in front of him. Although he skipped school on just the second day since he transferred, he probably wouldn't be forced to drop out just because of this.

In another room was a bed. Having this room designated as Hinako's room should be ideal. As long as Kurou could set up a shakedown in the living room he should be fine. He wasn't one of those sensitive sleepers who couldn't sleep without a bed. Even though he had a dream the previous night about sleeping on a comfy bed with a lovely wife, that kind of situation was something he was expecting in the years to come.

"I'll leave tidying up the living room to you. No need to overdo it."

Kurou pointed to the vacuum cleaner located in the corner of the room and then walked towards the bedroom.

Compared to a casual conversation, Kurou much preferred staying active.

This was because he didn't know what to do with this ————human girl of the same age.

"This must be a vacuum cleaner, it's my first time near one."

As soon as Kurou heard this eye-opening statement, he rushed back to the living room.

"You haven't even used a vacuum cleaner before?"

"I've seen other people use it. However, this thing must be broken. It's not making that whirrrr sound."

".....Did you plug it in and press the on button?"

He knew that she wasn't someone who was accustomed to the ways of normal life, but who would have thought that she was clueless on how to use a vacuum cleaner.

Hinako followed Kurou's instructions, unraveled the power cord and plugged it in.

"Well then, it should be ready now."

Hinako muttered and began cleaning up the tatami. Although she wasn't familiar with the fine details, she

did pretty much get the gist of operating the vacuum cleaner.

With that daringly skimpy miniskirt along with having to lean over as she moved the vacuum cleaner around, it was quite difficult on the eyes. Every day from now on, he would probably be in the presence of this appearance constantly. Kurou felt a bit tired from this. Being unable to rid himself of this overly revealing maid outfit wearing girl all because of his boss, it was really quite tragic.

"I should probably tidy up here a bit too."

"Eh!?"

Hinako suddenly began to move the vacuum on top of the table. Kurou did not even have time to stop her. Once the table was thoroughly cleaned up in this fashion, she started to shift the vacuum on top of the TV placed in the corner of the room.

"Hey hey hey! H-H-Hold on a sec, you shouldn't be cleaning these places! No, just forget about this place..... oh yeah, I'll have you clean up the shower room for now. "

"Understood."

Hinako nodded her head. It would be disastrous if she were to break the TV or some other electrical appliance.

"Well then, I'll be going now."

"Hold on, first set aside the vacuum cleaner."

Stupid wouldn't be the right description for her since Hinako seemed to be quite diligent.

It was more than just having a bad premonition about this. If Hinako were to be allowed to mess around with the household equipment, the result would be something quite frustrating. Although this was the case, it would be unbearable if he were to clean the entire place by himself.

Kurou explained in detail how to clean the shower room to Hinako and then sent her off.

"She should be fine.....although it won't be smooth sailing, I should be getting to work myself."

After depositing the unnecessary furniture the landscaper had into the hut's storage room, he began sorting through the necessities sent to them by Manaka and then he redid the vacuuming for the living room.

"That's about it. Well then, is she still cleaning the shower room....."

"Ah——"

"....."

Suddenly, Kurou's face tensed upon hearing a cry from the shower room.

He had considered ignoring it but that was out of the question. Kurou despairingly looked down.

"I must say, having warm water enter the shower room makes it much more tiring."

日奈子が、不自然に足を広げた体勢で、
バスタブの中に座り込んでいた。
短いスカートがめくれあがり、
青と白の縞模様の下着が
あらわになっている。
さらに、一緒にバスタブに落ちている
シャワーノズルから水が出っぱなしで、
メイド服が濡れてぴったりと
身体に張りついている。
「お水を出したらシャワーが暴れたのです。
捕まえようとして、湯船に落っこちました」

"This sort of thing, I already know."

Hinako was sitting inside the bathtub in an unnatural position with her legs laid spread out.

Her tiny skirt curled up, revealing her white striped panties.

In addition, the showerhead that fell into the tub was spraying out water. Her maid outfit was tightly stuck to her body after being drenched.

"Let me first ask, how did it turn out like this?"

"After the water came out, the showerhead started to go out of control. I wanted to grab it but then I fell into the bathtub."

"Really now?"

It was just as he predicted. Having someone who was incapable of even operating a vacuum cleaner go tidy up the shower room was never going to work.

Kurou took Hinako back into the living room and was currently drying her soaked long black hair with a towel.

Hinako did not reveal an annoyed expression, continuing to let Kurou dry her off.

If he were to remove the maid outfit and rub her body dry, she probably wouldn't even mind————these types of diabolical thoughts coursed through Kurou's mind.

".....Well then, you can dry yourself off now."

"Ok, I'll do my best."

Just like that, Hinako dried her half exposed chest and legs.

"Looks like the only thing qualified about you is your body."

"Yes."

Hinako nodded.

If she had denied that statement then he would have felt quite troubled. Rather, with her nodding in agreement, it was hard to respond to that. Kurou couldn' t help but clutch his head.

"With this, you're pretty much just a busty freeloader right?"

"That's how it is."

"In that case, stop nodding and agreeing so willingly. Jeez....."

Kurou helplessly stated as he stood up. He glanced over at the time and noticed it was approaching noon. It was most likely due to the heavy task at hand. Or was it because it was tiring having to deal with Hinako. In any case, he did feel quite hungry from all of this.

"First let me ask, are you able to cook?"

"I can eat but I can't cook."

".....I see."

The task of cooking will probably be Kurou's responsibility for the most part.

From the materials Manaka sent, there seemed to be a large quantity of instant ramen and other instant food products. If it was only for today, this should suffice.

"However, even though you're a highly regarded girl of the Sun Cult, it's surprising that you can't even handle tidying up. Just what kind of caged bird are you..."

"I've never been in a cage before."

"It's a figure of speech. Just who in the world raised you....."

"Even if you ask, there's nothing to say really. It was my first time going outside not too long ago, that's all."

"Eh, in that case it's pretty much like being in a real cage.....that said, hmm? For the first time?"

As Kurou walked out of the kitchen, he immediately stopped upon inquiring as such.

"You said you've never been outside before.....why is that?"

"I was locked within a room."

"....."

Kurou pressed his fingers against his temples.

In other words, the cause was most likely her imprisonment. If what she said about this being her “first time” was taken at face value, then the reasoning behind “you can’t even handle tidying up” would change once again.

If she were to be raised away from the masses and prevented from doing anything during her entire life up to now.....

“Gurr——”. Suddenly, a silly sound echoed.

“.....I’m hungry.”

“Well then, we’ll continue this later.”

It was improbable that anyone could be focused on a conversation when their tummy was growling.

Kurou once again headed towards the kitchen.

“Thank you for the meal.”

Hinako set her spoon down and mannerly pressed her hands together.

Despite it being instant curry and instant rice, Hinako held no complaints and finished all her food.

After Kurou finished eating the same thing, he drank a cup of water in one go.

“Well then, for now just let me listen to what you have to say for a bit. You said it was your first time stepping outside, what exactly did you mean?”

“I’ve stayed in one room the entire time ever since my childhood, maybe even from the moment I was born.....”

“.....”

“On the subject of where this place was, I don’t know even to this day. Although I don’t think it was a Sun Cult facility.”

This was a serious topic. However, Hinako narrated with a stoic expression.

"A room you say? Then, what kind of room was it specifically?"

"It was quite a spacious room with pure white carpeting and a glass ceiling. There was also a bookshelf, bed, and cushion.....there were two doors, one leading to a bathroom and shower room and the other leading to the outside of the room. However, I wasn't able to leave. "

"Haven't you ever thought about going outside to take a look?"

Kurou raised a question. It wasn't exactly a thought-provoking question. If he were to listen intently, it may cause her to feel anxious.

"Of course, but there was always people waiting nearby to stop me. They told me that I didn't have the founder's permission....."

"Are you saying that the people you've encountered were the ones that have been taking care of you the whole time? So what do you do inside the room all day?"

"Read books, which included holy scriptures and even history books. Although when I was young, I would frequently play around with everyone within the room. However, I've spent my entire time reading these last few years."

"You said you're only fifteen years old right? Before you were fifteen, was your life always like this?"

"Yes."

Hinako gently nodded.

If she was the cult founder's daughter, then having a completely different lifestyle wasn't exactly something unimaginable.

That was because the religious organization frequently engaged itself in terrorist activities.

However, the possibility of her receiving the cult's teachings or training in order to take part in fighting against the Swordie government should be set aside for now. Why would she be imprisoned though?

Objectively speaking, Sakurai Hinako was truly a beautiful girl. She even had this air of mystique surrounding her.

If they were to set her out in public, she could even become a major spokeswoman. There would be a lot of value in this. Why they would take special measures in concealing her, it was really quite baffling.

Or rather, what was the meaning behind not letting her out of the cult followers' sights?

No matter how he looked at it, since the information available was lacking, a judgment could not really be made.

“However, right now you’re here. Was it because you escaped?”

“I want to see the world with my own two eyes. It’s not enough to satisfy me just by hearing about it through books and people.....those who understood me allowed me to leave the room.”

“Was it those people you had frequent encounters with before? Were those guys followers of the sun as well

? Had they been ordered to do unlawful things by the cult founder?"

Kurou tilted his head and pondered.

Even though he didn't understand the fine details about the Sun Cult, he was clear on the fact that they complied with the cult founder's orders, thus risking their lives in combat.

He had experienced that multiple times. The one named Akari also battled for the sake of the organization, this was undeniable.

"I don't understand either. However, everyone wanted me to escape, for this I wanted to express my gratitude. Although, I'll most definitely never see them again....."

As Hinako spoke, a fleeting expression surfaced in her eyes.

When Kurou first met her, she was located in the van of the Sun Cult.

There was probably the fear that she was captured while escaping. Within Tokyo Swordia, the Sun Cult had their own information network. Escaping with a burdensome girl was certainly not possible.

It would be troublesome for the group that released the cult founder's daughter. Perhaps the whole crew was captured or more likely, killed. Furthermore, Hinako realized this aspect.

Hinako, she wasn't just a girl with a complicated standing, she was also burdened with this extremely serious matter————

"Nevertheless, you easily mentioned all these things. These are probably matters that you don't really want to discuss with other people right?"

Hinako stolidly shook her head.

"That director named Manaka told me that we should be having this kind of conversation right away."

"Eh, so that's why?"

"Yes, she said 'Kuro is a cynical person, therefore it would be best that you say whatever you can say as early as possible.'"

".....I see."

Kurou did not hold any particular interest in Hinako.

If he were to become her bodyguard, his impression of her didn't really matter.

However, even if that was the case, Kurou would want to protect Hinako even more if she honestly told him about her personal matters compared to if he knew nothing about her.

Kurou once again faced Hinako.

He wanted to impose one more question.

"Do you know why you were imprisoned?"

"I'm not sure. However, one of the people who set me free told me this, 'You, you're this organization's————no, you're the hope of all humans.'"

“Hope.....?"

Indeed, there was something unusual about Hinako. She could already be considered as an anomaly.

When Kurou first encountered her that night her entire body was enwrapped in light.

“However, calling you the hope of all humans is quite the exaggeration. As far as I know, humans aren’t in despair.”

The people who allowed Hinako to escape were also dangerous Sun Cultists, this was without a doubt. Nevertheless, wasn’t this just a vain hope instilled in her?

“I don’t completely understand what that meant. However, he also said something like this.”

“What would that be?”

Hinako gazed out the sunlit window and took her time in responding.

“He said, I was the————’maiden of the sun.’”

On the following day, sword training once again commenced with a lecture.

Even though Kurou diligently went to class, he didn't see Lars anywhere. This golden white-haired teenager had always been quite capricious.

Sword training was still the same as two days ago. The students would train with one on one matches. There also seemed to be team battles, studies on the various measures to deal with ranged weapons, as well as practice with the lance, daggers, and other weapons. However, the first years were not at this stage yet. Although Kurou felt that it would be more interesting the way it is.

"However....."

"Yes?"

Kurou leisurely tilted his head and looked at Hinako who was standing by his side.

"Why are you here as well? You're not planning on studying at the school are you?"

"The director told me to stay near Kuro at all times."

"Even so....."

Just a while ago during the other classes, Hinako would grab a chair from who knows where and sit in the corner of the classroom. The teachers didn't mind her doing this. Perhaps it was because Hinako greeted the teachers beforehand.

What was unexpected was Hinako being completely attentive during class. She probably felt invigorated at the idea of going to class. However, this invigoration was also the same for Kurou.

"Guess there's nothing I can do about it for now. I even thought about you as a possible conversation partner beforehand....."

"Kurou doesn't have any friends?"

This ojou-sama really hit on a painful subject.

"It's not that I don't have any friends. It's....."

Kurou took a brief glance at Sefi.

She seemed to be surrounded by a couple of girls. It was the girl with the short hair and the plainly dressed glasses girl he met yesterday.

"……!"

Sefi had just caught eye of Kurou and immediately revealed an astonished expression. Following that, she sharply glared back at Kurou.

It seems she intended on keeping her friendship with Kurou hidden from the public, but why would she be angry?

"Well, humans are shameful beings in modern Japan, especially within this academy."

"I see, although I had already known about this, I never thought it would turn out like this. Kurou is the guy that's rejected by everyone."

"……"

Known as the maiden of the sun, it appeared that she had a grasp of this superfluous information.

She probably didn't realize that she herself was being excluded in the same way as well.

"Hmm?"

A female student approached Kurou with a rather serious expression.

Her long brown hair rested on her shoulders. She was a very cute girl.

However, unbefitting of her cute appearance was that she exuded a clear sense of enmity. She was holding her sword firmly in her hands.

"Well then, who are you?"

Kurou inquired frivolously. If he responded to her hostility with the same sort of animosity, then he would be stooping down lower than a child.

"My name is Freya! I feel honored to be speaking with the disciple of the Sword Saint! Don't shy away just because I'm the number two ranked swordsman in our grade!"

"Oh, number two?"

Once Kurou finished his whimsical response, Freya raised her brow. He was probably seen as an offender for not being surprised upon hearing her number two ranking. Although, Kurou could care less about placement.

".....As for you, just forget about it. You seem to have entered the academy through standard procedures, however.....this girl is different! These are the sacred training grounds of the Swordies! Humans who are not servants can't just visit this place whenever they please!"

Emotions sure run high for this Freya person. Although, being energetic is a positive trait.

"It's like that? Well, although I do feel apologetic, there 's a reason behind this. I won't let her hinder you guys so please bear with it for a bit."

"In that case, I have a proposition for you!"

As if she had predicted what Kurou's response was going to be, Freya swiftly replied.

"Battle me! I heard you beat Sefi-sama while I was on break. If that was for real, I wish to confirm it myself!"

"Then, if I win, will you approve of her visitation?"

Even if she approves, it wasn't an official approval. However, if he was able to receive the number two ranked student's support, then perhaps his situation might somewhat be improved.

"Ha——, you want to determine a winner?"

The person who asked was only watching on with a blank stare. If only Hinako possessed a fraction of Freya's domineering attitude.

"Everyone wants to see your strength again. I'll be straightforward, before everyone was only focused on Sefi-sama and probably didn't notice you at all."

"I wish to be in the spotlight even more! I would hate to be wounded without being noticed."

No one laughed at Kurou's wisecrack.

Even Freya, who was slightly chuckling before, had now kept her lips sealed. They seemed to be uninterested in the jokes of a human.

"Hmm, if that's the case then you must try your hardest under all the attention. You also have this one advantage."

"Advantage?"

"You're the Sword Saint's disciple, plus you're a human living among Swordies. Us Swordies————you probably understand the tendencies of Swordie women right?"

".....Well, more or less so."

"If you are truly strong, then this academy might become your harem one day."

After that profound statement, Freya raised her wooden sword over her head.

As Kurou was keeping a vigilant watch over her, he felt somewhat stunned.

Although she had joked about monopolizing the girls here, but in actuality, if you thought about their tendencies, the possibility of forming a harem wasn't completely out of the question.

Kurou took a peek at Sefi.

His goal was to marry and establish his own household, which was the complete opposite of a harem. He had never carefully thought about that sort of thing before. However, upon reflecting over it, just what would be the best choice?

"I won't go down easily, otherwise I'd make Sefi-sama look bad!"

Freya got into her stance, she was pretty much set.

The number two ranked student didn't appear to be a pushover. Kurou confirmed this within himself. Although Sefi was ranked number three, there seemed to be quite a gap in strength between the two placements.

In addition, the other party knew about Kurou's win over Sefi so she probably won't be negligent in this regard.

Sefi on the other hand revealed a worried expression that was poles apart from her previous unhappiness. She probably understood Freya's strength very clearly. Of course, she was even more familiar with Kurou's strength. To still feel worried for him, that says a lot about how powerful Freya is.

No, compared to this, he perhaps felt quite honored to be instilled with a bit of anxiety by Freya.

Kurou slowly began posturing his wooden sword.

The students' chitter chatter suddenly ceased.

Everyone wanted to pay close attention to who wins this matchup.

A human who could beat Sefi, his strength was certainly genuine.

Haha, ok, you guys can have a look. It'll be displayed for you all to see.

Kurou finished preparing his stance and pointed the tip of his sword to Freya.

At this moment, Freya made her move. It was hard to follow her visually.

In an instant, the distance between Kurou and Freya became increasingly close————

The two of them began their clash of swords.

"No matter how many times I run it over, it still doesn't make any sense."

Hinako blankly muttered.

After lunch, in the corner of the living room, Hinako was currently reading through the cooking books that Kurou had borrowed from the library.

However, she didn't really take note of the book's contents very assiduously. In Hinako's mind, she was replaying the events that occurred earlier today.

"What doesn't make sense?"

Kurou, who was wearing casual attire consisting of a T-shirt and shorts, leisurely rested on the tatami mat and was reading a manga magazine before standing up impatiently.

"I'm referring to you Kuro. During today's sword training....."

"Ah, that, you don't need to worry about it."

"I want to know even more about matters regarding the outside world."

Hinako looked towards Kurou once again.

"The Sun Cult pretty much only reject Swordies. However, those kinds of cultists would only acknowledge the battle strength of a Swordie."

"Even if they reject them, there's no point."

"I also heard that about some of the horrors regarding Swordies. Kanae, who was present during the massive anti-government protests that occurred in some district eight years ago, was someone I used to have numerous

encounters with. She would frequently tell me, at that time there was a Swordie sent to suppress the rebellion who possessed monstrous strength."

"Monstrous....."

Kurou lightly scratched his forehead as he spoke indifferently.

For Hinako, Kanae's words didn't present much of a true image.

At the time, Kanae was only a middle-schooler when she had said "the Swordies were swordsmen that could easily cut down humans who were armed with weapons ", yet it was hard to forget those words.

"However, against those monstrous Swordies————Kuro only needed one strike to take her down."

The strike that Hinako saw from Kurou today seemed to be etched into her mind.

The one known as Freya, who was somewhat of a typical Swordie girl, the moment she raised her sword————the victor had already been decided.

When in the world did Kurou raise his sword, and when did he swing down?

Hinako could not comprehend any of it. In the end, she wasn't even sure if he had attacked.

By the time she realized it, Freya's body was already shaking and soon toppled to the ground within the classroom.

Once the sound of her impact dissipated, the spectators who were holding their breath began to whisper to each other.

"The Swordie students all appeared to be staring in disbelief. Kuro, what in the world did you do? I have absolutely no idea."

"Did the one-hit KO ruin it————, everyone seemed completely disappointed."

Kurou still maintained his indifferent expression as he smirked.

It looks like Hinako was trying to reconcile the teenager in front of her with the swordsman who knocked out Freya.

He was completely inconceivable.

No matter how unworldly of a person Hinako was, she did realize that the number of humans who were like Kurou were numbered to just a few. A human living among Swordies and able to win against them in swordsmanship, just what path of life results in such a rare existence?

"I want to know. It's only because I want to experience and witness various things that I would come to the outside like this. I have a great deal of interest in you. How come you can defeat a Swordie as a human? Although it is said that you are the disciple of the Sword Saint, but in the end, why are you the one that she selected as her disciple? Swordies teaching humans swordsmanship, besides you, are there any other instances?"

"If you excessively dig at the roots of someone's past, you will be seen as quite a nuisance."

"What did I do that'd be considered annoying? This I want to know as well."

Hinako undauntedly spoke. Although she felt Kurou was a human full of mysteries, she wasn't terrified of him at all. Because it was impossible for her to understand his swordsmanship, she wasn't able to understand the horror behind it.

"Well, there's nothing about the past that I want to conceal anyways."

Kurou nonchalantly spoke.

"When I was seven years-old, my parents died. However, my master who I happened to meet by chance ————the Sword Saint took me in. From then, during that seven year span until I was fourteen years-old, I put all my effort into learning the ways of the swords.....not too long after the Sword Saint's whereabouts became unknown, I worked for the Sabers. After that, I entered the Sword Academy and even carried an unexpectedly heavy burden with me. That's pretty much it."

"What a troublesome life."

"Don't indifferently deny another person's hardship. Furthermore, that last bit of what I said was referring to your annoying comments."

"Ha, annoying? Since no one has ever said anything like this to me before, it does feel quite refreshing."

"....."

What the heck, Kurou revealed a complicated expression.

Having been surrounded by the people who treasured her throughout her life, there were many things that felt like a change of pace for her.

"However, I still don't understand any of this based on your simple explanation. Plus, to easily take down someone like Freya is very baffling. Please go into more detail."

"Geez, still not letting that matter go I see. That said, even if you were a swordsman you still wouldn't be able to understand my swordsmanship. Well then, if I were to tell someone like you who doesn't even have the battle capability of a little dog, there's no chance you would understand————"

"....?"

Suddenly, Kurou ended the conversation.

He gestured Hinako to stop with his hand as he gazed out the window.

“Umm, Kuro?”

“Quiet. Listen to me, don’t leave my side.”

Kurou picked up his katana that was nearby and stood up.

His previous smirk was now replaced with an anxious expression. Is he the same person from just a moment ago? Hinako carried this suspicion.

This further deepened the enigma surrounding Kurou.

Hinako closely followed Kurou outside.

In order to learn what was unavailable from within that room, Hinako received help from a group of people and was brought to the outside world.

In addition, Kurou was someone who kept provoking her curiosity.

It didn't need to be said that Hinako would never leave his side.

The small hut Kurou and Hinako resided in was located in a small forest deep within the courtyard.

Although it was a forest, it was also equipped with a pathway leading to an open clearing with the hut and its surroundings. In front of the hut, there seemed to be a parking area that could hold three or four vehicles.

Kurou stood waiting in the center of this clearing as something was approaching them.

"Ugh!....."

Kurou leaned against his katana as he groaned.

Overall, there was this very strange sort of feeling. There was actually a suppressed light force closing in on him, but for some reason a sense of hostility wasn't detected.

If he knew it was an enemy, he could engage in a pre-emptive strike. However, in this situation where it was still up in the air, he was unable to freely take action.

"Whoever it is seems to have arrived."

Hinako quietly spoke from behind him.

She was also capable of keeping a calm demeanor and sensing the bizarre aura. Despite her believing Kurou was an odd person, she was somewhat mystifying herself.

"It's coming from over here this time."

Kurou redirected his attention and faced the incoming person head on.

From the depths of the shadowy forest, a figure appeared.

The person walked towards them with an exceedingly languid pace, their hair and dress swaying in the light breeze. Indeed, the person was a girl.

She was wearing the Sword Academy's uniform and hoisted a massive object over her shoulders.

Even though the darkness made it hard to visualize, the object appeared to be both long and wide.

"Ah, it's her, the one who for some reason kept glaring at me during sword training. She's also quite cute."

".....However, the object being held over her shoulders isn't cute at all."

Kurou distinctly saw the object being carried on Sefi's shoulder as she was approaching.

Sefi's height was about a hundred and sixty centimeters. The scary thing was the object she carried was a sword that was about the same length as her. Furthermore, the width of the blade was abnormally wide and the metallic sheath which contained the blade must have been more than thirty centimeters wide.

Rather than calling it a sword, it appeared to be more like a cannon that she was carrying.

"Umm, Sefi-san? What in the world is that....."

"That means this must be the first time I've shown this thing to you."

Compared to her unexpected entrance, Sefi instead used her usual manner of speaking in response.

Sefi's cannon————no wait, her sword was being held upright by one hand.

"Wow!"

Hinako was astonished.

Well, can't blame her for that. To be able to single-handedly grab that ridiculously long and massive sword was unthinkable for any human.

Sefi pressed a button of some sort located on the metallic sheath. After that, the sheath fell onto the ground and a thick blade appeared. Although the light blade wasn't activated, he understood it was still an extremely ferocious weapon.

"Let me introduce you to my personalized sword————the Starbreaker."

"Woah, even the name lacks charm."

This time even Kurou became somewhat surprised.

When Swordies attained their Swordsman title, they were able to receive their own personalized swords.

They were modeled after their parents or master's style. There were numerous circumstances to be taken into account when having a swordsmith forge one's personalized sword. At that time, the swordsman would relay all of their preferences and details to the swordsmith and the result was a sword that suited them greatly.

"Starbreaker.....Swordies give their swords names?"

Having not understood the prior situation still, Hinako asked in admiration.

"To Swordies, the sword is an object that is comparable to a clone of themselves. Before, the name was given in Swordia's language, but nowadays using Japanese to name a sword is becoming more and more common."

"That has nothing to do with it."

"Isn't it great though? If you were Japanese, say for example you named your dog Taro——, if other people didn't know the language, then they might instead call your dog John."

"Using pet names as an example.....speaking of which, does Kuro's sword have a name?"

"I have nothing of the sort."

The weapon Kurou used was a katana received from his master. Although it was a good quality sword, to Kurou it was just an object. For someone who wasn't even a Swordie, he had no intention to name his own sword.

"This stuff doesn't matter!"

Sefi spoke with a piercing tone, cutting off Kurou and Hinako's carefree conversation.

"Rou! Don't you understand the present situation!?"

"No, I don't get it at all. Sefi, why did you suddenly pull out your sword? Since it's you, you didn't have to barge on though, you're always welcomed in my bed."

"Quit joking around! That said, what in the world do you call this? Why did it turn out like this!? You bring over a maid all of a sudden and you guys are living together in this kind of place!"

"Haha, I probably didn't mention this to you yet Sefi. Eh? So you know why we are living here?"

"For this sort of thing I had immediately figured it out. That's because I have people looking into Kurou's tendencies."

"I think I know the motives of those investigators."

It was unlikely that it would be anything such as assassination related activities.

"Before that, I should have asked what Sefi's motive was. Why did you come here? Why are you pointing your sword towards me?"

"W-Well you see.....Rou, your sword goes beyond all expectations.....ah, forget about my motives and all that. Once I cut you down you need not mind that!"

"Of course I'm going to mind!"

As Kurou sharply snarked, he took a step back. Kurou understood Sefi didn't have any killing intent but he also knew that she wouldn't threaten and jokingly point a sword towards others.

Even if there was no killing intent, there was no doubt that she was going to take on Kurou seriously.

Regarding the reasoning behind Sefi's actions, Kurou could only think of one explanation.

".....In that case, there's something I want to say to that overly inquisitive maid over there.

Kurou looked towards Sefi as he spoke.

"What is it?"

"During the day, Freya probably mentioned it, something regarding a Swordie's tendencies."

"Yes it has been mentioned before. However, Kuro rendering that girl to a state where she couldn't stand up anymore after combat left such a deep impression on me. I had forgotten about what she said accidentally."

"What an unpleasant manner of speech you have. Whatever, let's leave that aside for now.....Swordies are known as the sword loving race."

"Loving.....swords?"

"Ugh....."

Hinako was dumbfounded while Sefi on the other hand frowned in dissatisfaction.

Kurou paid no heed as he continued his explanation.

"Just like how humans can be drawn towards appearances, smarts, physical capabilities, economic potential and many more things, a Swordie will be drawn towards a strong swordsman. Especially among female Swordies————just when a girl hits puberty, that kind of inclination appears to strengthen intensely."

"By a strong swordsman.....? Hey Kuro, within the Swordies, aren't females overwhelmingly strong? That means....."

"That's precisely the case. Normally speaking, Swordie girls always take a liking to other strong girls."

"It's probably hard to bear children like that."

Hinako straightforwardly pointed it out.

Although it was just as Hinako said, however, for her to clearly draw this type of conclusion was really quite impressive.

It was also said that male Swordies were not really obsessed with swords. Usually, they were still into cute girls.

As a result, male Swordies usually will not end up as opponents to the females. Although this could be described as quite tragic, it doesn't necessarily equate to a lower birth rate.

Another thing was, once puberty ended for a female Swordie, their infatuation with the sword weakens. Additionally, the habits of a female Swordie————— usually does not result in many problems in regards to procreation.

"I've said it before, I will never have an affinity towards other girls. I don't have that habit of being attracted to those who are strong. Just like how humans

appreciate looks and personalities, there are swords I do like and ones that I don't."

"So you mean to say, you like my sword right?"

Kurou maintained perfect composure as he asked.

Right now, Sefi was blushing profusely.

"T-T-T-This cannot be! I have seen Rou's sword countless times! Why would I even care about that sort of thing! If I were to see it again, there's no chance that I'd be shocked or anything!"

As Sefi was denying this, she rambled on for quite a bit.

Although the possibility of a harem was quite low, it seems that Sefi had been hooked by Kurou's sword.

"......Hmm, it's really quite strange. I understand being fond of a stronger swordsman, but that blonde girl with the ponytail doesn't seem to have a reason to cross swords with Kuro."

Hinako remained calm the entire time. Was there anything that could rattle her?

Kurou wryly smiled and continued to elucidate.

"Being drawn to swords, this topic has to be explained further. Under this sort of state, the girls seem to want to battle against their favorite swordsman."

"So it's another particularly frightening display of affection."

"Well, it is what it is. That said, your response is so insensitive."

For it to be a good, overly inquisitive attitude, it would be nice to see her express some type of shock after learning about the essence of these things.

"I-I already said it isn't like that. I'm not battling him because I like him! It's just that, I'd like to slash apart the unfathomable Rou!"

"That's a very pathetic excuse."

Kurou wryly smiled and pulled out his katana in one swift motion. With the moon and starlight reflecting off of it, the blade flashed with an icy luster.

".....Overall, it leaves a despairing impression."

Hinako stated as she slowly walked away from Kurou.

In fact, it was basically as she said.

Sefi was holding her massive sword that resembled a chunk of metal.

In contrast, Kurou carried a katana that was of ordinary length and width.

From a spectator's point of view, it would appear to be a fight between a cannon and a pistol.

"You should stop spitting out all that nonsense! Rou, if you don't focus, you'll die!"

"I won't die if Sefi doesn't slash me!"

Sefi turned a deaf ear towards Kurou's snark reply. After lifting the sword with both hands once again, she suddenly swung downwards.

As Kurou barely dodged it, that thick blade slid right past his body and created a loud impact when it hit the ground. The soil was immediately sent flying and the ground caved in as if there was an explosion.

"It's not over yet!"

Sefi did not pause one bit as she raised her sword from the ground and slashed at him from the side.

A roar akin to a ferocious gale accompanied the swift sword slash. With much difficulty, Kurou backed off this time to dodge the strike. However, that heavy, thick blade just barely brushed past him and he felt the impact of the ensuing wind pressure.

"Y-You....."

With this, even Kurou broke out in a cold sweat.

Even if he was hacked by a normal Swordie, his body would probably turn into scraps. If he were to be cut by Sefi's Starbreaker, then perhaps not even the tattered pieces of his body would remain. Although the burial process would be rendered unnecessary, this kind of death was really quite undesirable.

"Oh!"

Sefi's lightning quick blade came flying by his side as if she wanted to cut him into two. In one swift motion, three trees were even severed. In addition, the trees that

were chopped had been sent flying like a twig. The base of the chopped tree carried a gruesome look. It appeared completely mutilated as if it was mauled apart.

"Hey hey."

Kurou unwittingly gulped.

Going way back, Sefi had always been this straightforward. She was the type to pour all her strength into one attack. With that kind of style, using a long and heavy blade like this was probably the ideal choice.

Kurou would never be able to utilize her type of sword . Even though Kurou's katana wasn't necessarily light, it did allow him to make use of his body's natural movements. Despite that, he might not even be able to lift Sefi's Starbreaker let alone wield it. As expected, there was an impassable divide between the physical capabilities of a Swordie and a human.

"Rou! If you keep slacking off like that, even you will be...!"

"......!"

From Kurou's perspective, Sefi's sword had numerous weaknesses.

If the strikes were dodgeable, he could continue evading them no matter how many there were————— as much he would like to think that was the case, Kurou's stamina was not on par with hers. Under the pressure of the Starbreaker, who knows how long he could keep up his focus.

Kurou tightly clenched his teeth.

There was no choice, if this were to keep up—————

"Sefi!"

Having seemingly been blown away, after he dodged Sefi's overwhelming downward sword slash at the very last second—————

"……!?"

Kurou sprung forward, putting so much power in his takeoff such that it was as if he wanted the ground to cave in behind him, and then slashed downwards.

“Ahh.....!”

Sefi let out a small shriek as she backed off.

Her suit, jacket, and shirt were cut right down the middle as if the strike had been precisely measured. It wasn't just that though, even her bra was beautifully cut into two halves.

However, the skin beneath the bra remained perfectly unharmed.

With that divine maneuver, Kurou managed to only cut Sefi's clothes.

"Very impressive Kuro. Even though it would seem that you are a pervert, that technique was truly excellent."

Hinako stated with a completely composed demeanor.

"Every Swordie can manage this sort of maneuver. It's nothing impressive really."

".....No, it's not like that. To be able to evade my sword, slash my clothes, and do that without harming me or cutting a single hair on my body.....there are only a few who could do this even among Swordies."

"Eh?"

Not letting his guard down, Kurou maintained his stance and tilted his head.

Originally he had thought that if her clothes were cut, Sefi would waver a bit and cease her actions. However, Kurou's expectations appeared to be completely falling apart.

"You're very strong Rou. So strong, so strong, so strong, so strong, so strong....."

"Ah!"

While single-handedly wielding her sword, this time she attacked in succession.

She repeatedly struck without any hesitation at all. Her strikes were carefully aimed at his weak spots. Even though Sefi's face was flushed red, she seemed totally elated. Despite that, her attacks were still pinpoint sharp. It really made him think, "as expected of her".

"Rou, more, more, come on give me more! Let me feel satisfied!"

"Enough nonsense!"

In actuality, this was practically the first time Kurou had witnessed this habit of "Swordies loving swords". Seeing a girl take this much enjoyment from it all, it was without a doubt a first time experience for him. Sefi was still very powerful even out of her usual serious demeanor.

Kurou's last strike was unable to stop Sefi and instead added more fuel to the fire.

Well then, what should he do?

Kurou was evading Sefi's strikes as he contemplated. With that said, even though he was pondering while dodging like this, Sefi's attack was not to be underestimated.

"What are you doing Rou! You'll die if you don't counterattack, didn't I say this before!? You are not allowed to die!"

"My goodness, just who is the one trying to kill me here————ah ha, damn it!"

Just as an idea surfaced in Kurou's mind————he had lost his train of thought.

He no longer had the leisure of idling away in thought. He also couldn't slash Sefi directly. If he were to kill the princess of the four generals, even if he had a valid defense, there would be no way around the death sentence. Furthermore, Kurou did not wish to harm Sefi in any way.

As a result————

"Sefi."

Kurou instantly closed in and proceeded to tightly grab the wrist of Sefi's right hand which was holding the sword. Just like when he sexually harassed her back then, Kurou's movements completely caught Sefi off-guard. She revealed a stunned expression the moment her right wrist was seized.

"R-Rou.....!"

Sefi's eyes opened wide.

However, Kurou disregarded that as he inched his face closer————

".....Mmm!?"

His lips overlapped with Sefi's. Her half opened lips looked as if they were being clamped as Kurou's lips tightly held on.

"Mmm.....mmmm!?"

".....Phew."

He only had three seconds to savor her soft lips.

After Kurou separated from her lips, he kept his close distance and stared at Sefi's face.

"A-A-Ahhhhhh....."

Sefi's already flushed red face became even redder this time.

"Y-Y-You idiot!"

Following that, Sefi suddenly turned away and darted off like an arrow.

The Swordies were practically all fast runners. Even Sefi, who was wielding her Starbreaker, disappeared into the forest in a flash.

".....Hmmm, she ran away. Does that mean she doesn't like me?"

"Is that your impression?"

Hinako snarkily replied as she walked by.

"Even if it's a girl I meet by chance, I'll get excited as long as she is cute. Although that doesn't mean I'll take a liking to them.....do you think it was the same for Sefi just now?"

"You're asking someone who has been under house arrest for over fifteen years.....so....."

Indeed, Hinako wasn't very familiar with the relationship between boys and girls.

"However, that's probably what they call a kiss right? It's my first time seeing one. If you could have sustained it for a bit longer, I would have been able to observe it more closely."

"Even with this kind of request.....I'm not the type to get excited over someone watching me."

If it were to have lasted a little longer, he probably would have been chopped up by Sefi at that close of a distance.

"How regrettable. Well, she already left, isn't that a good thing? Although being under attack was a catastrophe, you also got to enjoy a piece of it."

"That couldn't be more true."

With just a quick kiss, she pretty much returned back to her normal state————although this was a simple solution, there were definitely other methods.

The tender feeling of Sefi's lips, he was able to clearly describe them————if it weren't under these conditions, he would really like to savor them again some time.

"It was clearly sexual harassment, but to have only been called an "idiot", I am really quite fortunate."

"Even so, it would be best if you apologized. Furthermore, the things she left behind must be returned to her."

With that, Kurou glanced at the sword sheath Sefi left behind.

Although it was just a sheath, it appeared to be quite heavy. If he were to drag this along the ground all the way to the girls dorms, it was very possible that his back would break.

"Aaaahhhh!"

"……!"

Suddenly, a desperate cry was heard in the distance.

The person was without a doubt the same girl that was on a rampage here earlier. The melodious sound of her voice even made that shout a pleasure to the ears.

After that, Kurou took action without a second thought.

Grabbing Hinako's hand, he ran off.

He had a very bad feeling about this.

In a scenario where even Sefi, who was holding onto her personalized sword, unwittingly cried out for help——

No matter what, he felt what was awaiting him would definitely not be pleasant.

Kurou's night seems to have been dragged out longer.

"Sefi!"

As he traversed the forest, he noticed Sefi's figure on the school's pathway which led into the forest.

She was currently sitting on the ground and pressing against her right hand. Upon closer inspection, her Starbreaker was located a few meters away from her.

"R-Rou....."

Sefi spoke with a sigh of relief. However, Sefi wasn't looking at Kurou, she was eying the other silhouette standing beside her.

"Hmm.....?"

Kurou directed his gaze towards the other figure.

She was wearing a loose fitting robe and because of the hood draped over the person's face, he was unable to see their expression. However, the petite figure along with the curves showing from the seams of the robe would indicate that she was a girl.

Her right hand was carrying a sword. It was the type of single-edged blade that most Swordies used.

Kurou grasped the katana he had pulled out in his hand and stood in front of the robed girl.

"Who the heck are you? What did you do to my woman?"

"Wait, what!? What do you mean by Rou's woman!?"

"There's no need to worry, I'll definitely make you feel very happy."

"That's not the problem! My f-first kiss.....was clearly taken away from me, and yet you're still boasting!"

"Oh, that was your first kiss?"

"Enough, enough!"

".....These two really lack any sense of worry."

Hinako's muttering could be heard.

It was exactly as Hinako described, plus Kurou was not the serious type.

"Well, what happened Sefi? Are you hurt?"

"I'm fine, my right hand just feels a bit numb. When I was about to go back to the dorms, I was suddenly attacked by this person."

"Hmm....."

"Without any explanation, she just charged right at me .....it was really hard to believe."

"You have no right to be saying this."

It would probably be best if Sefi did a bit of introspection.

Although she did say it was a surprise attack, to be able to send her sword flying meant the opposition's swordsmanship wasn't exactly your everyday type. If the average swordsman attacked Sefi's heavy, thick sword, their own sword would most likely be severed.

"Well, if you're ok then it's all good. If you had harmed my girl, I wouldn't be able to let things end like this————!"

Kurou leaned back and dodged the enemy's sudden attack.

".....Tch."

The robed girl smacked her lips. Based on the faint sound that was heard, it was a girl after all.

Kurou positioned his sword and entered his battle stance. That last attack was aimed at Kurou's throat. In other words, the opponent didn't have any qualms with taking his life.

"Am I no different? Or rather, you don't show any mercy to anyone who gets in your way? Well, it doesn't matter either way. Furthermore, it's getting late, I should probably dispose of you immediately."

"....."

Having caught a glimpse of the girl's face, it appeared that she revealed a twisted smile————

Immediately afterwards, the girl jumped into the air.

"....!"

She sprung high up, as if she had vanished from Kurou's line of sight. That jump had to be at least four, five meters high.

"Guh!"

She descended like a bullet. The sword she was wielding clashed with Kurou's katana. An ear piercing sound echoed and sparks violently erupted from the two blades.

The girl then wielded her sword in a dance-like fashion. On the other hand, Kurou consecutively parried her second and third strikes.

".....Guh! This is really dangerous!"

"....."

The robed girl jumped back a few meters. Without even a running start, it was hard to imagine that she was actually able to leap that far away.

"So you are a Swordie after all. In addition, it appears you are knowledgeable in the ancient battle styles."

"....."

The robed girl did not respond.

The blade she wielded was cloaked by a faint light. It seemed that she was able to jump and utilize the light blade at the same time.

It was quite easy to see that she possessed superb swordsmanship. It was different compared to the battle against the toughened criminal ringleader and the fights

against Sefi and Freya, who both lacked actual combat experience. The robed girl possessed this reliable technique and honed her strength by overcoming many hellish trials.

"However, you're strong, really strong. Seeing someone like you, it's clear to see how humans lost during the Great War a couple decades ago."

The battle between humans and Swordies commenced when a massive portal opened which resulted in an abnormal atmosphere.

Furthermore, there were three reasons why Swordies were able to triumph over humans under those circumstances.

The first was the Swordie's undeniable overwhelming physical capabilities.

Viewing it from the perspective of a human, an ambush with a sword versus an automatic rifle or machine gun was a completely illogical action to take under a normal state of mind. All you do is become a target.

However, from a Swordie's perspective, humans were the ones who were inscrutable. Many of their soldiers would be bunkered down in narrow entrenchments in an unnatural kneeling or prone position. Leisurely using long-range weaponry when attacking was just asking to be sliced to death.

In what ways were the Swordies even targets? They were able to use their swords to reflect bullets, dodge artillery shells, and close in hundreds of meters in distance instantaneously. The human soldiers using these rifles were just cut down one after another.

And it didn't just involve head on surprise assaults. Like this robe wearing girl, they hacked at them from outside their line of sight. There was nothing the human soldiers could do against a Swordie's three-dimensional attack range.

"That said.....this is the first time I've seen Kurou's sword clash with another person's."

"When you're unable to evade, that is the only option."

Kurou slightly waved the blade of his katana.

The blade of the sword didn't get bent in the slightest. He was left unscathed after clashing against the sword of a Swordie. Under normal circumstances, this was an impossible scenario. That girl's attack clearly had the force to blast away Sefi's ridiculously heavy sword.....

"As a matter of fact, there's nothing about it that's hard to believe."

The robed girl did not initiate her next attack. Perhaps she didn't know what to do next.

Kurou smiled for a moment and then decided to enthusiastically answer her suspicions.

"If I were to evade your sword using normal methods, it'd be very challenging. However, I can read the path of your sword————right before you swing it. As long as I can read your planned attack and sense your aura, dodging you won't be hard at all. It's all due to Swordies being stubborn in using their speed and strength to wield their sword. With that, I'll be fine as long as I slightly duck away from the path of your sword after our swords clash."

"It sounds easy. If it's easy to accomplish that sort of thing, there shouldn't be any difficulty then....."

Sefi grudgingly spoke with admiration.

Using the minimum amount of strength required while utilizing the opponent's momentum in parrying away their sword, thereby breaking up their strike. If there was just one instance where the sword wasn't wielded properly, not only would the sword be snapped apart but he would most likely end up dead as well. The only time a Swordie's strike can be parried is when executing top notch techniques in the instant he sees through the opponent.

"In the past, there were people known as samurais within this country. Many of them would wager their life on their sword and were not inferior to the Swordies in any way. Of course, their physical strength was weaker than that of a Swordie. However, to compensate for this ————the samurais had ingenuity."

Hundreds of years ago, even though they only numbered a few, Swordies had already started visiting this world. The number of samurais who fought them seemed quite plentiful in number.

It was said that among them, there were warriors who were capable of winning against the Swordies.

"This swordsmanship was created by the numerous powerful pioneers who used it to battle against Swordies. The remaining records from them were gathered, and codified as————the Olden Style."

"Ha!"

The robed girl once again jumped into the air.

The moment she landed, she unleashed a full force attack that was repulsed by Kurou's sword. Following that, accompanying this choreographic movement was a fury of attacks which was fearlessly parried away by Kurou.

The two blades collided, sparks flew in all directions, and a sharp metallic clash sounded.

In a flash, three instant kill slashes came at him, but they were also deflected by Kurou's sword.

No, it wasn't just that————

"……!?"

The robed girl was stunned to the point where she couldn't even utter a sound. That was because there was a small slit in her robe by her shoulder and the skin beneath was faintly bleeding.

"Eh, my slice was too shallow. I really did focus on cutting in deeper."

Kurou wryly smiled.

As he countered those three strikes, he also slashed at the robed girl.

"You're very strong. However, you're nowhere near good enough. Well, you shouldn't be discouraged just because you can't keep up with me. I measured my strength against the world's number one monster every day. Although I was reluctant to do so, I have become quite strong from this."

Indeed, the robed girl was very competent. Her skills were much more powerful than anyone he had seen in the Sword Academy.

However, no matter what there was no way it could match the world's most omnipotent, the Sword Saint. Compared to her sword, this robed girl's sword was not even close in terms of speed and technique.

"If you stop resisting, I won't take your life. Furthermore, I want to know the reason why you attacked Sefi."

"....."

The robed girl did not reply. Instead, she suddenly motioned the tip of her sword in a swift circle.

What was the meaning behind this? Just as Kurou thought to himself————

"Flames, go forth!"

The robed girl spoke in a low voice, resembling a voice from hell.

At this time, a flame appeared and wrapped itself around the white light blade————the slender flame was akin to a snake and it shot out straight towards Kurou.

"What the——!"

Kurou was unable to fully evade this unforeseeable attack. The snake-like flame swept past Kurou's elbow, burning his skin as it sailed through.

"Could it be————mystic arts!?"

Kurou stated in shock.

It was said that Swordies could utilize powers that were the equivalent of magic————

This was the second reason why humans lost the Great War.

Being able to attack from long-range by manipulating flames, water, wind and such, basically the power of the mystic arts, caused a great deal of trouble for the humans during the Great War. Due to the assistance of these dynamic mystic arts, the Swordies were capable of cutting into enemy lines. Mystic arts were without a doubt the deciding factor during the Great War.

"These mystic arts.....were supposed to have vanished a long time ago!"

Sefi picked up her sword and stood alongside Kurou.

It was just as she said. After the Great War ended and the portals closed, for some reason the Swordies lost their ability to use mystic arts.

Even those who participated in the Great War were completely unable to use mystic arts in the many years after. Plus, the next generation after the Great War were incapable of using mystic arts right from the start. That was how it turned out————

How odd. The robed girl and Kurou were both different from any other Swordie. Whether it was swordsmanship or mystic arts, there was something peculiar about their essence.

“What the heck is up with you? Are you really a Swordie.....?”

“Hmph.....”

The robed girl responded with a grunt of contempt towards Kurou’s suspicions and produced another flame snake.

“Tch.....!”

Kurou smacked his lips and charged forth. This was so Sefi and Hinako wouldn't be caught in the flames.

The robed girl expelled one scorching flame snake after another. Since he couldn't defend the flames using his sword, Kurou could only rely on his predictions to evade the flame snakes.

"Damn it!"

In terms of swordsmanship, Kurou's was still better.

However, even Kurou did not anticipate there would be an attack involving mystic arts.

If he wasn't careful, he might be immediately defeated even with the kind of strength he possessed.

"……!"

As the robed girl was manipulating the flames, she also mixed in some direct attacks. After Kurou did his best to evade her sword, he was able to maintain his distance to her.

Setting aside the fact that he was able to do it against just her sword, he was even able to exercise such

patience when successively attacked by mystic arts as well.

He was already incapable of saying “I won’t take your life”. Not only that, there were only going to be two outcomes if things continue like this, either being slashed or roasted to death.

“Stop————”

“.....?”

Suddenly, a brief voice was heard.

Kurou unwittingly looked in the direction of the voice.

The normally stoic Hinako now displayed an expression full of animosity, something Kurou could have never imagined.

“Please stop————”

“.....!”

Following Hinako’s shout, the robed girl stopped in her tracks.

The flame snakes that were fired off in quick succession were instantly dissipated. An inconceivable silence shrouded the entire area.

It was hard to believe that the robed girl, who was an exceptionally skilled swordsman, would cease her actions upon hearing Hinako who wasn't a swordsman or powerful in any way.

However, right now there was only————

Just as Kurou repositioned his sword,

"Sefi-sama!"

From a far distance, multiple shouts and footsteps were heard.

Someone was closing in, shouting as they sprinted.

"……!"

After the robed girl abruptly pedaled off Kurou's shoulder, she forcefully jumped back. She then hopped onto the branch of a nearby tree.

Just like that, she leaped across the trees along the school's forest pathway and disappeared.

".....She got away. No, rather we were the ones who were rescued....."

Kurou pressed on the shoulder that she had pedaled off of as he muttered.

Neither Sefi or Hinako had anything to say.

"Sefi-sama, are you here!?"

Leading the pack of people who were approaching them from a distance was that short-haired girl who was always around Sefi. The others consisted of quite a few people from Kurou's class.

"Since it was already this late at night and you guys still had not returned to the dorms yet, everyone here decided to scatter around in search of you all. However, you guys being unharmed was the best result we could've hoped for!"

"Um, thank you, but nothing really happened."

"......Eh, however, the front of your uniform has been cut open. Don't tell me....."

The short-haired girl sharply glared at Kurou.

However, Kurou turned his head away, pretending he had no clue to what was going on.

Although he should be grateful for everyone's overprotectiveness, right now wasn't the time to relax and smile.

"What in the world, that person just now....."

Hinako once again returned to her stoic expression and quietly muttered.

What just happened? Kurou wanted to ask Hinako.

If that wasn't Kurou imagining things, the robed girl actually stopped her attack right when Hinako shouted.

Hinako, just what did you do?

"I get the feeling that we are caught in a mess....."

Kurou voiced his complaints and sighed. He had already lost count of how many times he had sighed these last couple of days.

There were numerous things he had to reflect over. However, he still had to send Sefi and the other girls back to the girls dorms.

Afterwards, in terms of what he could do————

He can only pray that nothing else will happen tonight .

Chapter 3 - The Hunter and the Hunted

It was currently the morning of the next day.

Kurou and Lars returned to the scene of yesterday's incident.

"Hmm, there are actually burn marks left on the surface."

Lars squatted down over the pathway, feeling the ground as he spoke.

He called Lars out during the early hours of the day in order to inspect the situation from yesterday. Regarding this matter, they had already reported this to both the Sabers and the academy and received permission to investigate.

"Speaking of mystic arts, I get the feeling there might be yet another blast from the past."

"It was totally out of the blue. I couldn't believe that someone who could use that sort of thing would actually appear."

"I've never heard of any Swordies who could use mystic arts either. Actually, it would seem there still remains many mind-boggling things about this world."

"You two don't seem to be surprised....."

Hinako quietly muttered as always.

Although a new incident had occurred, his mission as Hinako's bodyguard was still in effect. Because of this, Kurou was forced to travel with her frequently.

Consequently, Hinako had to tag along even during an investigation at the scene of the incident.

"No, I am shocked. After all, these are forgotten techniques from ages ago. Nowadays, these mystic arts or whatever————"

After speaking till that point, Lars suddenly placed his thumb over his lips and began pondering over something.

"Forgotten.....? Hmm....."

"What is it Lars?"

"It's nothing. Something just randomly came to mind all of a sudden."

Lars smiled and shrugged.

"Actually, perhaps the mystic arts aren't even relevant. The only thing I'm focused on is how someone as strong as Kurou got into an arduous battle."

"Kurou getting into a grueling battle, is this really that unimaginable? Although I don't quite understand, is Kurou truly that formidable? Olden Style or something of the sort, before he had mentioned some nonsense like that....."

"Did you really just call it nonsense, jeez....."

Even though Kurou felt frustrated, he also knew that there was nothing he could do about it.

From Hinako's perspective, someone who didn't know anything about swords was most likely unable to comprehend Kurou's swordsmanship.

"Ah, so you even mentioned the Olden Style? Well, there's no doubt Kurou is powerful, however it'd be hard to answer exactly to what extent. Furthermore, strength

is all relative, sometimes there's even luck involved. With that said, the chance of defeating an opponent who outclasses you at some point is very possible."

"In other words, there's no such thing as absolute power?"

"No, there is."

"......Eh?"

For a moment, Hinako was dumbfounded towards Lars's rambling and then questioned him in reply.

Hinako was astonished. However, based on Lars's expression it didn't seem like he noticed as he continued to survey the area.

"That's not exactly the case for the person who Kurou had difficulty dealing with.....that said, relying solely on this it would seem that apprehending the criminal will be very problematic. That's because in this world there are many powerful people who we know nothing about."

"Even if we know she can use mystic arts, the criminal didn't leave any traces. Also, there is no chance she would just use mystic arts in public under normal

circumstances. I felt her battle style was a bit archaic but there's no way that could be used as a clue."

"A familiar style of swordsmanship.....did you get that sort of feeling?"

"That I don't know. There's practically no distinctions among Swordies."

Basically, each Swordie honed their own style of swordsmanship.

Even though its foundation came from their parents and master, after that they would create their own exclusive sword techniques by themselves. It could be said that their own class of swordsmanship comes from combining their own physique along with whatever suited their fancy. Essentially, becoming someone's disciple was pretty much just seeking out individuals who were considerably tough to practice against.

If it was between siblings, there are cases where similarities will arise. However, if you were to make a who resembles who comparison, it would be very hard to gauge for any semblances.

Lars switched hands and quietly continued on.

"As for clues the criminal may have left.....ah Kurou, you did mention wounding her right?"

"It was just a graze. With the recovery abilities of a Swordie, the wound probably healed a long time ago."

The flesh of a Swordie wasn't just robust, even their recovery rate was phenomenal. That kind of body appears to be made for combat. If it was a small wound, it would be most likely instantly healed.

"Then with that, there's no point staying here looking for clues. For now, let's just head back to school first."

Kurou nodded in agreement and walked off with Lars. Hinako's pitter-patter footsteps clicked from behind as she followed.

"So you mean to say that incomprehensible blondie who carries that bizarre, massive sword.....is Sefi-san? What's up with that person?"

Ever since Hinako encountered Sefi within school, she would unwittingly mix in some hurtful words when speaking about her.

"Actually she hasn't done anything yet. Didn't she come to school like she normally does?"

After Lars responded to her, he looked towards the other students walking on the path to school. Although he didn't see Sefi, Kurou figured it was just as Lars said. She wasn't a feeble girl who would skip out just because she was attacked.

"I wonder what that was about? What's the reason behind Sefi being attacked?"

"You sure have a lot of questions. As for the reason, even I don't know."

Clearly agitated, Lars shrugged his shoulders.

Besides the Sabers, he had many other intelligence sources. Speaking of information networks, his was much more vast than Kurou's. If he didn't know, then there must have been little progress from the investigation done by the police and Sabers as well. Only

a couple hours had passed since the incident and with there being no evidence either, this was an expected result perhaps.

"Sefi is the princess of the four generals, so being targeted isn't really that unthinkable. Whether it's a tsujigiri incident or an assassination attempt, these are all possibilities."

Kurou tightly gripped the hilt of the katana that was strapped to his waist.

"Let me be the one who kills this criminal."

"Kurou must really like Sefi. Although I guess I can understand why."

"Lars, are you interested in Sefi? No can do, I won't let that happen."

"Sefi doesn't belong to you. Well, I'm not interested in her either way."

Lars stated with an implicative smile.

"That's because I have my sights set on others."

"......Looks like you two both have rough lives."

"You shouldn't be impressed with something as weird as that."

Kurou wryly smiled as he eyed Hinako, who was in a daze. Whenever he gets into a conversation with her, for some reason he gets thrown off his rhythm.

"Hmm?"

Kurou suddenly detected something strange.

On his way to school, some of the students appeared to be behaving differently from yesterday.

"Why is everyone carrying their swords?"

Indeed, the entire student body along with Kurou and Lars were alike, they all had their swords strapped to their waists. There were also some students who toted massive swords. They were probably swordsmen with personalized swords.

"It appears the academy notified the students this morning. The entire student body was told to carry their swords on them. Furthermore, everyone is supposed to

travel in groups of at least two and are restricted from stepping outside during the night. Actually, this really isn't anything shocking right? After all, there was an attack on school grounds and as a result these protective measures can't be implemented too carelessly."

"I suppose so....."

If it was a normal school, having a lockout wouldn't be out of the ordinary either. The idea of having students engage in this sort of self-protection was also not too uncommon. If it was a human school, this would never happen for sure.

"This thorough preparation is really quite something. Speaking of which, I can't go protecting every unbefriended student."

"Except, something feels strange. Setting aside the fact that the school made an extremely quick decision on this, don't the students seem a tad overly anxious to you? Clearly these students are Swordies who are practically born without fear."

".....Really?"

Kurou tilted his head. That said, the students they encountered on the way to school all seemed restless. Those with wavering eyes and hands on the hilt of their swords numbered quite a few.

"Regarding this matter, let me explain."

"What!"

"Eh?"

Kurou tilted back in shock as he heard a sudden voice from behind him, Lars on the other hand opened his eyes wide in surprise, and then there was Hinako who didn't really react in any particular way.

"W-What? Why are you here Manaka?"

The person standing behind Kurou and the others was one of the Seven Swords and the director of the Sabers, Manaka. She was wearing her scarlet Sabers long coat and revealed a miffed expression.

"There are some matters I have to attend to so I just snuck in ahead of time. Haha, it's such a pain to have to suppress my light energy. I don't want to scare these

adorable students, but the principal sure gets on my nerves."

"Suddenly erupting into complaints.....setting those aside.....what in the world are you planning to do here?"

"I'm under a lot of pressure. Well, forget about it. Before the other students notice who I am, it's better that we leave here first. Lars, switch with Kurou for a bit."

Manaka stated as she pointed to Hinako. She appears to be saying Lars will be temporarily assigned to guarding her.

"Let's go Kurou-kun."

"Where to?"

"Some·place·nice♪"

Which probably means there will be bad news awaiting him————Kurou had this twisted explanation in his mind as he followed behind Manaka who had set off without delay.

Regardless of her temperament, she was Kurou's boss and guardian. Although she was always like this, Kurou had no authority to deny her.

".....Umm, why are we in the girl's bathing room!?"

Kurou's voice resonated within the vast changing room.

Currently it was eight in the morning. Not one soul was in sight within the bathing room in the girl's dormitory other than Kurou and Manaka of course.

"What's with the umm? It's because I've decided to take a bath. What are you doing Kurou-kun, take off your clothes already."

"I have to go in as well!?"

Judging from her outer appearance, it was hard to pinpoint flaws on a beauty such as Manaka. Although

she was not quite as mounded as Hinako, her figure was still very exquisite. Countless men would probably spend money just to enter the bath with her.

However, to Kurou she was just his master's younger sister and someone he had known since his childhood. Furthermore, she was also his boss in the organization he was affiliated with. She was practically family to him in a sense. She probably wasn't thinking about him as a man either, otherwise being naked while facing someone of the opposite gender would clearly be awkward.

Just when Kurou started to get anxious, Manaka boldly took off her long coat.

"No need to worry, I already readjusted the water temperature."

"No, I wasn't worried about the water temperature."

"Alright alright, hurry up and get in. If you dare oppose me then you'll be fired."

"Abusing your authority like this.....?"

However, if it was Manaka, it was true that she could freely fire normal members. Following that, Kurou gave up all hope and began taking off his clothes.

"Hmm? Manaka, that is....."

"Ah, for the time being, if I'm not carrying this on me when I go out, then....."

Manaka also seemed to carry her sword by her waist whenever she pleased.

Her personalized sword was a long, pitch-black sword ————no, for a sword it was overly elongated. It differed from Sefi's sword which was wide and heavy, rather it gave off the impression of being excessively long and slender.

The Dancer————indeed, this really was a suitable name. Was it because of the slender and long dimensions of the sword that led to its name? Only people along the lines of family such as Kurou knew the origin behind the name or perhaps those in another world who have been slain by her might know as well.

"Alright, come on in. Since it felt like a hassle to return home to cook, I decided to stay at headquarters instead. However, just taking a bath while feeling a bit out of sorts, it couldn't have come at a more perfect time."

Could she have come to school just to bathe? Manaka paid no heed to Kurou's suspicions and removed one article of clothing after another.

Kurou hurriedly averted his gaze and stripped down. However, things should be fine with a towel wrapped around their waists.

The sound of Manaka's footsteps echoed as she walked off.

After hearing the front doors to the bathing room open , he entered on through as well a while later.

The women's bathing room was exceptionally capacious. Since it had to accommodate hundreds of girls alternating in and out, this was probably to be expected.

After Kurou did a quick rinse of his body, he entered the bath. The bathing pool was quite spacious and could hold a couple dozen people at once. It was vastly

different compared to the tub in the small hut he was living in where he couldn't even stretch out his body. Although he was forcefully invited in by Manaka, it wasn't all that bad.

"Phew——.....this is the life."

Manaka, who was already bathing, heaved a heavy sigh as she spoke. Did she put in some sort of bath agent? The water retained a greenish hue. Fortunately, he felt quite relieved that this obscured her body a great deal.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door to the bathing room. After Manaka sloppishly answered, the door was opened and in came a maid. Based on her attire , she did not resemble a student. She appeared to be one of the servants among the school staff.

"Ah, it's here. Thank you for your time."

Manaka's face was brimming with elation as she was handed some type of wooden pail by the maid. The maid exchanged courtesies and then immediately left the bathing room.

"This is the one. If I didn't have this then————"

Inside the wooden pail floating in the water was a wine bottle and a wine glass. There was no need to ask what was inside the wine bottle.

Manaka poured the wine into the glass and drank it all in one go.

"Ahh, that was delicious. Having Japanese wine while bathing is truly above and beyond all else. Being born in Japan is great....."

"It's hard to imagine that this statement would come from some otherworldly being....."

"It's been many years after the end of the Great War. Presently, practically all Swordies were born and raised here. With that, drinking Japanese wine while bathing is a common occurrence you know."

"Bathing early in the morning while drinking? I don't think so."

At least, it wouldn't be a prevalent occurrence among people within a conventional society. Of course, no matter what was said here, Manaka did uphold a serious disposition in public.

"Isn't it great to do this every once in awhile though?"

Manaka pouted like a child.

"Day after day I would be forced to sit at my desk and sort through files during work. I can't take it anymore. If

I don't get a bit of time to rejuvenate myself then――――__"

"Is it really that busy? Could it be due to the Sun Cult.. ....?"

Although it had slipped his mind due to the assault incident, the cult founder's daughter had fallen into the hands of an enemy organization. No matter what kind of aggressive behavior resulted, it wouldn't be that surprising.

"No, the Sun Cult has been very quiet. It's just they've been too quiet which makes it very frightening."

"If that's the case, then wouldn't the opposite be very strange?"

No matter what, it was without a doubt they were secretly planning something.

"Well actually the Sun Cult has nothing to do with this . If they were to shamelessly charge us in an attempt to rescue the child, then as long as we carry out some suitable precautions ahead of time we should be fine."

"Sounds simple enough.....then if it doesn't have anything to do with the Sun Cult, what could it be?"

"Here, it's this."

After Manaka lifted up a panel-shaped object, she suddenly threw it towards him.

What he picked up was a touchscreen tablet. Since it was able to be brought into the bathing room, it must have been the waterproof version.

"Take a look at the document displayed there."

Kurou nodded and turned on the tablet, paying close attention to the document.

The document contained the facial profile of a girl who was around Kurou's age along with a brief description of her by the side. She had black hair which was uncommon among Swordies. Overall, she was a pretty cute girl.

"Migune.....female student within the Sword Academy, top student among the freshmen. She has the title of Swordsman, her mentor is the Sword Princess, Ragunoa, and her parents are senators....."

The contents contained little of interest. Looks like she was the strongest Swordie first year student above even Sefi and Freya. However, to Kurou, she was just an insignificant person.

In her overview, the majority of her record consisted of the outstanding achievements she had attained at the sword tournament. However, as he scrolled down the document.....

"Hmm? Deceased.....?"

"Yup, she's dead. In fact, it was probably about ten days ago that it happened."

Manaka drank her wine as she nonchalantly spoke.

"More accurately, she was probably killed. She was sliced diagonally from the right. This kind of death could not have been a suicide, she was most likely killed as a test for the assailant."

"What a dangerous issue. Oh, could it have something to do with the rumored tsujigiri incidents in the Outer Human Region? Although, in those incidents the victims were all humans....."

"Is that so. However, the kid's remains were found on the road next to the academy. The time was approximately midnight when it occurred, which was also about the time when she was presumed dead. That means after she was killed, the assailant was immediately spotted."

"What could she be doing at that time? That said, I haven't heard about this matter yet."

Kurou was still a member of the public security force. However, if a Swordie girl who was also the top student of the Sword Academy was killed, it would result in a huge predicament. Kurou shouldn't just bypass this as if it had fell on deaf ears.

"We've initiated an information lockdown. After all, the Sword Academy's top student was killed at a nearby road. Originally, Swordies were known as peaceful idiots , but actually there's practically no one that could revolt against us besides the Sun Cult. Thus, the number of Swordies who do have actual combat experience have greatly decreased in number. Plus, Migune's parents would feel greatly ashamed since their daughter was killed by an unknown assailant."

"What a senseless way of thinking."

Even if their daughter was killed, does that really take precedence over arresting the criminal?

Once the incident is made public, the information collected would probably lead closer to apprehending the criminal. Kurou could not comprehend the logic of Migune's parents.

"Eh? However, could there be something more to this? Could it have anything to do with when Sefi was attacked————"

"Migune was eliminated with just one strike. In addition.....part of her right hand was burned."

"Burned?"

Kuro instantly understood before Manaka got a chance to finish.

"So you mean to say.....there's the possibility she was attacked by mystic arts?"

"She was clearly slashed to death by a sword, but having a burn wound as well is really peculiar. If it was

just mystic arts being used then it would be a whole different matter. That said, Migune's abilities were quite remarkable. However, if she was ambushed by mystic arts, then I can see how she could be easily disposed of."

"So the first and third ranked students were attacked within a short time frame of each other.....the parents of the two are both government officials, so it's not that unbelievable for them to be attacked."

It was hard to imagine that there were many Swordies who could utilize mystic arts. Although there were two cases here, it would be odd to think there was no coincidence between the two.

"Well, it'd be great if there weren't any more victims from now on. Although Migune's situation wasn't made public, it seems that the ones who discovered her corpse were the students of the academy. They were told to keep it to themselves but they weren't able to do so completely. Furthermore, word of Migune's death seems to have been circulating around the academy already."

"In other words, they've decided to actually impose a curfew because a second attack occurred."

Now it was understandable why the students were so anxious.

However, the students in the academy were definitely very talented, but if they were to wander around outside late into the night it'd be troublesome. It would be better if they conducted themselves with caution, otherwise they might end up as the next prey if they were not careful.

"Overall, the top ranked students have considered their parents' statuses and decided to bring over bodyguards already. With that said, there are still many students who decided not to bring bodyguards with them. The response was they wanted to protect their own lives."

"Everyone seems to be quite overconfident of their abilities. It'd be best if they candidly accepted protection."

"Even Sefi declined her sister's offer to send over bodyguards."

"Haha, you mean Sylphy-sama....."

Kurou also understood Sefi's older sister, Sylphy, extremely well. She was a friend of the Sword Saint and due to that, Sefi was able to witness the training between the Sword Saint and Kurou as a bonus.

Sylphy dearly loved her little sister and was presumably very worried for her.

"For now I'm also scouting around for the criminal. However, since the school didn't accept my request for cooperation, I can't really accomplish much on school grounds."

"I see."

Kurou nodded.

If it was just an untrackable evildoer, then it wouldn't be that much of a concern. However, if she was even capable of using what was a supposedly lost art, then as the organization which oversees Tokyo Swordia's public security, this wasn't something that could just be set aside. In other words, there was going to be a heavy burden placed on Kurou and Lars who both stayed on campus.

"I understand where you're coming from. At the very least, I'll prevent her acting willfully within the school."

"Then I'll be counting on you. And by the way, please focus on your studies."

"Do you want me to cut classes?"

Kurou tossed the tablet back as he responded.

"The elimination tournament that decides the yearly rankings will kickoff in two days."

"Eh, really?"

Kurou was shocked. Although Sefi had said it was fast approaching, it was the first time he had heard it was already this close.

"Because you were enrolled solely based on your swordsmanship, you won't graduate if you don't attain a good grade."

"It's just if I do get a good grade, I'd probably be resented."

"Becoming stronger means you have to cast those people aside. This you should know."

"Well.....alright, I think it's about time to leave, I feel a bit woozy."

Kurou stood up, preventing the towel around his waist from slipping off, and stepped out of the pool.

"Wait a sec Kurou-kun."

"Ha?"

Right as Kurou turned around, both of his cheeks were nabbed by Manaka.

Manaka also stood up, unhesitant in exposing her entire body. Looking down a bit, those two beautiful mounds entered his view.

"M-Manaka, what are you doing....."

"'What are you doing', that is my line. I don't care if you're a human or something else, you are my sister's———Sword Saint Hyouka's disciple."

"I-I know."

Kurou shuddered as he responded.

Kurou felt as if he was going to be blasted away as he endured Manaka's overwhelming light force. She probably released the light she was holding back.

"I don't care if it's mystic arts or surprise attacks, I can't let someone like you who is at best a rascal get away. As the Sword Saint's disciple, how dare you show such disrespect."

Manaka suddenly grabbed Kurou's cheeks and applied strength with both of her hands. Manaka had to control the flow of power, otherwise Kurou, who had made a slip-up, would have had his cheeks shattered.

Manaka was furious.

Because of their frequent encounters, Kurou understood very well that Manaka highly respected her sister who was the Sword Saint.

While he stayed with the Sword Saint deep in the mountains, there were many people who visited. However, the person who came the most frequently was Manaka.

Was that it, Kurou finally realized it.

As one of the Seven Swords who held the title of Sword General, she was even more intolerant of having the Sword Saint's reputation be tarnished than Kurou was.

Manaka didn't come here just to pass on information and it wasn't to check out the situation either. For these sorts of things, it would have been fine if she decided not to come. Even for Migune's situation, it was already spread around school so it would not have been long before Kurou caught wind of it.

Manaka's true objective was to reprimand Kurou.

"Might be resented? Don't make me laugh. If you worry over something like this and have a bad showing during the elimination matches, I will have you hacked apart."

"......U-Understood."

Kurou fervently nodded.

If he were to joke around in this instance, his cheeks might actually be smashed to pieces.

After hearing Kurou's reply, Manaka gave a slight smile.

"If you understand then that's good. Eh?"

"W-What is it?"

After removing her hands from Kurou's face, she raised the fringes of his hair. Following that, she gently caressed Kurou's forehead.

"Kurou-kun, you still have a scar here? Looks like you took a nice slashing."

"Ah, haha, it's from when I was young and was first wielding a real sword. A scar like this wouldn't just go away."

Kurou was not able to keep up with Manaka's sudden change in attitude. Even Sefi's attitude when she came to attack him was identical. Kurou was baffled when it came to girls. Perhaps even the invariable Hinako was hard to figure out.

"I suppose. Although your conduct was quite detestable, and hard to understand.....however, it's really

quite a waste when you've grown up with such an adorable face."

"Calling my conduct detestable was uncalled for."

Kurou swiftly turned his back to her, not wanting his scar to be touched. That was because a scar was only a symbol for one's weakness.

"Be careful not to get hurt during the elimination matches. Good luck Kurou-kun."

After that, Manaka once again lightly caressed Kurou's head.

"Ah——, but winning it all is probably going to be tough."

Manaka wryly smiled as she spoke. Although she had stated "not to have a poor showing", this time she decided to say something more passive.

However, Kurou shared the same opinion as her.

"Definitely attaining victory, something like that cannot be said for certain because————that bastard will also be there."

The end of class bell rang once first period concluded.

After the teacher departed from the classroom, Lars simply sat in his chair and stretched.

Lars's seat was located in the very back of the classroom next to the windows and Hinako sat alongside him in a chair. On the notebook Lars gave her, she would enthusiastically take notes. Although Japanese history, which was the class just then, was boring to Lars, Hinako found it very interesting and nodded along nonstop as she took notes. It was just as he heard from Kurou, she was a girl who possessed a devout curiosity.

"....."

Lars redirected his gaze from Hinako and proceeded to scour the room.

Did it have something to do with yesterday's incident? The students were a bit cautious. Even so, they were

young teenage girls. Once the break period came, they couldn't help but be in high spirits as they began chatting .

The topics that could be heard were rumors within the school, television shows, fashion and food related items. Those things were probably about the same as what humans of that age would talk about.

Just where are the lines separating Swordies and humans, Lars was currently contemplating over this.

Their formidable physique, aptness in swordsmanship and things of that nature weren't just trifling matters. For Lars to be thinking like this, perhaps it was the influence of always being around a certain teenage human.

"Lars, come over here for a sec."

"Eh?"

At the entrance of the classroom, there stood a blonde haired girl with a ponytail calling for Lars.

Lars stood up and signaled Hinako over. She kept her sights on her notebook as she followed behind Lars. Was she perplexed, or was she just being careful due to the circumstances? What an indecipherable girl.

At the entrance of the classroom where Sefi was, there were her supporters who always surrounded her. That short-haired girl and that girl with the glasses were fixed by Sefi's side.

Emanating killing intent like that must be very tiring. Lars wryly smiled from within.

"What is it Sefi?"

"Step over here for a moment, I have something to say. "

After Sefi finished speaking, she hurriedly walked off. Her supporters were on watch as they tailed her from behind. Lars did not hold any particular suspicions either . After giving Hinako the signal, they too walked off.

Sefi finally stopped once they reached the end of the hallway. Following that, she seemed to have told her supporters to "please leave". They politely complied.

Once they had already backed away to the point where they couldn't hear, Lars began to speak.

"If it's about Kurou, he didn't come today. The Director took him away so he probably won't be going to class now that he's become her toy."

"T-Toy....."

Sefi muttered and then her face turned completely red. What kind of delusional thinking was she experiencing?

"Sefi, so does that mean you want to violate Kurou?"

"V-Violate.....enough with the nonsense! All I did was fight him for a bit!"

"Fighting late at night? Well, Sefi has already completely entered puberty. Having made the sword your heart and soul, it could also be said the instincts of the 'sword loving race' have taken hold completely."

"I already said it wasn't like that! I-It's not that.....if Kurou didn't come, please send him a message for me.

Tell him that I'm terribly sorry for coming at him so suddenly.....and also, for rescuing me.....I'm very thankful....."

"If thats the case, then wouldn't it be better to tell him yourself? Kurou would surely be happy to swoop on over."

"That's why it'd be troublesome!"

Sefi anxiously spoke and lowered her already blushing face.

From Lars's perspective, it was very obvious. Sefi said it'd be troublesome, but it was more likely that she would be embarrassed. This princess-sama was really dishonest with herself.

"Well, whatever. I'll help pass along the message when I get the chance. Class is about to start, so with that I shall take my leave."

".....Hold on, since now is a convenient time, there's something I want to say to you."

"What?"

Just as he was about to go back to class, Lars stopped in his tracks.

"Lars, don't do anything too suspicious."

"Actually I haven't even done anything. I'm just taking in the school lifestyle is all."

Lars was all smiles as he responded to Sefi's calm but subtly insulting statement.

"There's simply no way to know what you'll do from here on out."

"What a nuisance you are, Sefi. You must be one of those superstitious types aren't you?"

"I don't believe in superstitions, but what I don't believe in even more is you Lars."

"....."

Lars smirked. Even if insults were hurled at him with ill will, Sefi's straightforward no nonsense manner of speaking really did give others a favorable impression.

".....Are you two acquaintances?"

Suddenly, Hinako chimed in.

"Ha? You didn't know? What do you mean do I know him, this guy is————"

"Actually, I'm related to the four generals. Because everyone among the households of the four generals are considered relatives, there were normal exchanges between us. I've known her since I was a child."

".....Ah, so it's like that."

Sefi spoke as if she was at wit's end. It seemed that she was unhappy with Lars's evasiveness.

Lars's relation to the house of the four generals was real. Furthermore, Lars was an only child.

As long as things went without a hitch, there would be no doubt that he would be one of the successors. Because government officials did not require talents in swordsmanship, even a male like Lars could inherit the family business without trouble.

If someone who was unfamiliar with these matters heard this, they would probably be shocked. However, Hinako didn't seem surprised at all. As an ojou-sama

who was firmly bounded to her boudoir, she probably wasn't going to have any particular reaction to his connections with the four generals.

"To sum it up, me and Sefi only know each other that's all. Plus I don't want to get entangled with Sefi and have to go through sheer hell dueling Kurou. Although that would be quite interesting."

"There's nothing interesting about it at all!"

Sefi asserted with a stern tone. Looks like she wasn't the type to take a joke.

"So what's this superstition of which you speak of?"

"After confirming one suspicion you instantly have another? You're so persistent in your old ways.....kind of like Rou....."

"That was very disrespectful."

"Even being adamant in one's position is very similar between the two. Well, you don't need to concern yourself with these superstitions or whatever.

Furthermore, I don't really want to say it myself. If you absolutely must know, go ask Kurou. That's because that guy has no resistance towards cute girls."

"......Hmph!"

Sefi was clearly being difficult to deal with. Looks like her heart was really captivated by Kurou's sword.

Lars didn't really get to see what kind of swordsmanship Kurou displayed.

However, he thought this was truly an intriguing scenario.

The nation's two kids who held the highest authority along with the daughter of a terrorist group's leader.

Not only were they never supposed to be able to converse, but even seeing each other should be out of the question.

If those that were strictly Swordies had witnessed the assembly of these three people, then they might faint as a result.

Lars was gently smiling as he lightly stroked the sword suspended from his waist.

In other words, there was actually some significance in going to school. Even though he had firmly believed that going to school was an onerous matter for quite a while, perhaps it ought to turn out interesting.

The elimination tournament didn't undergo any changes despite the assault incident. Although it didn't mean much to him, he felt that it'd be pretty nice if he could somehow entertain himself a bit————Lars heedlessly prayed for such a result.

The periodic elimination tournaments for the Sword Academy will be carried out over three days.

Every grade level followed their own respective schedule, thus no one could really spectate the elimination tournaments outside of their grade. If a person wanted to see another grade's matches, there would only be the league matches involving the top ranked students in every grade for them to see.

The academy had an open circular arena where the elimination tournaments would take place. The arena covered an expansive area so it could fit a couple individual matches at once.

"Oh, I saw that girl's panties."

"I feel that Kurou is way too blunt when it comes to these things."

Hinako, who was sitting alongside him, quietly muttered.

Despite Hinako saying as such, to Kurou, there wasn't anything particularly enthralling about these matches. Formal wear was mandatory for an official battle————and because of that, the girls would wear their uniforms to battle which allowed him to appreciate the slight exposure of their panties and the breathtaking sight of their swaying breasts.

"Hmm——ah, since I'm obviously no longer going to take the stage today, I should be able to leave early. However, there's no leaving until the all the matches are finished."

It appeared that spectating other people's matches was a form of studying.

Kurou already participated in the first set of matches and the second set of matches, so he was finished with all his matches for today. It didn't need to be said that Kurou of course went on a string of victories. Up until now, no one felt astonished anymore about Kurou winning even as a human. Having severed Sefi's wooden sword and one-hit KOing Freya, the students still wouldn't accept such a result but they were capable of judging a person's strength. Nowadays, no one would freely think that Kurou's victories were reliant on luck.

"Ah, Lars is up."

"You have heard that he is the son of the four generals right?"

"So what", Hinako tilted her head and replied as such.

Although Kurou couldn't reprimand others, she was being way too negligent of his status. If it was within the school, then she would be able to get by. However, if she were to directly address Lars by his name then she would incite a huge predicament. Perhaps even reprimanding her was within the realms of Kurou's job.

As he was pondering over this, Lars's match was underway. His opponent was a girl who appeared to be pretty subpar.

Just like sword training, wooden swords were used for these matches. Actually, if the students were to go against each other with real swords then that would be way too dangerous.

Furthermore, someone had said that utilizing wooden swords during the matches would closely simulate a battle between real swords anyways.

The first to take action was the girl. The girl moved in a gliding fashion to close the distance. Next, she came charging in and swung the wooden sword. Although it was a straightforward sword maneuver, that speed of hers was beyond that of a human. Even normal Swordies would have a difficult time reacting to that.

However, immediately after, the girl's wooden sword was sent flying into the air.

As the cheers erupted, Lars had already lowered his own wooden sword. Just when did he send her wooden sword flying, only a select few were able to discern that.

"Eh.....? What an easy win. These Swordies, aren't the males supposed to be extremely weak?"

"There are exceptions with everything."

Kurou spoke in a relaxed tone.

"If you mean to say an exception among exceptions, then it'd be more believable."

"Don't turn my words into describing him as a rare animal. Lars is very strong. Even if it's a female Swordie, probably no one here can overcome him. The students here are still just fledglings."

Lars did not flaunt his victory and walked off with his usual indifferent expression. On the other hand, the girl who lost could not believe what had just happened as she gazed at Lars's fleeting figure. She was probably brimming with confidence originally, but now it was just a pitiful sight.

"Even among Swordie males, there were a few exceptionally strong fighters. Lars is one of them. However, there's a subtle saying among Swordies. The powerful male Swordies————"

"The swordsmanship of the powerful males is lodged with a demonic essence right? Hahaha, do you really believe in this old superstition!? Jeez, you humans are really something."

".....Yo."

Confronted with this sudden voice, Kurou had no choice but to greet her.

Freya and a couple other female students were approaching where Kurou was sitting.

Along with Freya, all the highly ranked students had a cast of supporters surrounding them. This was already a given. If he was able to win the tournament, then he might be able to acquire all the girls for himself.

Kurou mulled over this immoral matter just as he was about to reply to Freya.

"Is something wrong?"

"Ha, I overheard your nonsense so I just came over to say a few words is all! Who cares if he is the four general's son. Either way, he can't beat true swordsmen like us!"

"There's no such thing as a real or fake swordsmen. As long as you possess the qualifications, anyone can be a swordsman."

"Quit joking around. Swordsmen are separated by strong and weak. By the way, your next opponent is me! Your sword is unpredictable, this I already know. As long as I figure out this phenomenon, then I'd have unlimited countermeasures at my disposal. You already have no chance to win."

"If that's the case, then if you lose, you'll have to do whatever I want ok?"

"Eh....."

Freya unwittingly took a few steps back.

Although it was a childish joke, it appeared to have had an unexpected effect towards Freya.

"W-What do you mean by doing whatever you want.... ..W-What are you planning."

Despite being an otherworldly being, Freya was still just a fifteen or sixteen year-old girl. She seemed to be strictly adhering to the concept of chastity. Although, Kurou did not intend on having her do any H things.

"Well, after you lose you'll have something to look forward to."

"O-Ok.....that's fine! As long as I don't lose it shouldn't matter! Prepare yourself!"

After leaving these words, Freya and her supporters left.

"Normally speaking, wouldn't Kuro lose under these circumstances?"

"That girl is a bit off."

Kurou was looking at the gradually fading figure of Freya as he took pity on her.

At this time, Freya suddenly turned around and walked back.

"What is it? Is there something else you want to say?"

"I forgot, you seem to be still investigating that assault incident right?"

"That's my job. For now, I'm still a Sabers member."

The other students pretty much knew that Kurou was investigating the assault incident against Sefi and the number one ranked Migune. Because he was investigating the other students, it was to be expected that they were acquainted in these matters.

"You don't have to do anything unnecessary. That bastard who killed Migune.....I'll kill her myself."

".....Could it be, that girl named Migune was a friend of yours?"

Towards Freya's sobering tone, Kurou attentively responded to her.

"There's no need.....to speak about our relationship to you."

After she quietly finished speaking, Freya left for real this time.

Regardless of how stupid Freya looked, she was carrying a heavy burden. Furthermore, this burden of hers was a particularly difficult one to deal with.

"Kuro, what's your plan for scouting out the situation?"

"Without a doubt I have to press on."

Addressing Hinako's concerns, Kurou was extremely critical in his response.

The incident's investigation rested on the Sabers and the criminal who attacked Sefi was definitely not to be forgiven. It was just as Manaka had said, he was responsible for his gaffes.

Freya also had her own objectives.

However, Kurou could say the same for himself. He definitely had no intentions on giving up his work. Even for his own bright future he.....

"This is of course my job.....hmm?"

Suddenly, his cellphone vibrated from within his uniform's pocket.

He retrieved his cellphone and noticed he had a text sent to him. The contents were————

"Oh."

Kurou wryly smiled for a moment.

However, Hinako didn't seem to notice that smile of contempt from him as he was facing a certain direction.

Kurou put the cellphone back in his pocket and stood up.

"What's wrong Kuro?"

"Looks like I have an excuse for leaving here. Anything would be more riveting than pointlessly sitting around here."

There was a massive warehouse located towards the edge of campus.

The Sword Academy was built from an army base from the Great War. Who knows how many of those structures were still intact presently, however this warehouse was one of them.

The thick iron door of the warehouse was opened just enough for people to pass through one at a time.

Kurou brought Hinako along and went through the door. Although the sun reflected in from the windows, it still felt strangely dim.

Old containers and corrugated boxes were placed all over the area, seemingly left unkempt. The floor was also covered with dust.

"Hey——, you're here aren't you, quit wasting my time and come out already."

In response to Kurou's holler, one after another, there were many figures who emerged from the shadows of the containers. They were girls who wore the Sword

Academy's uniform————Kurou also had recollections of some of them.

One of the girls unhesitantly approached Kurou.

"You've got some nerve to be coming here. Originally I had thought you'd be more cautious."

"I am being cautious. Since there didn't seem to be any danger, I just walked in."

As Kurou calmly finished speaking, the girl who came up————had short hair which visibly exposed her forehead. She was one of Sefi's supporters and she glared at him in disgust.

"Quit making us out to be idiots.....actually, it's whatever. Anyways, I haven't introduced myself yet. My name is Lima. There's something I need to discuss with you."

"Indeed, if that wasn't the case, then you wouldn't go out of your way to use a preposterous reason such as " there's information on the incident" to call me out."

Kurou knew something was up based on the text message, thus he came over here.

It wasn't that surprising that they knew Kurou's texting inbox. Since he had been investigating the students here due to the incident, he told them "if there's any information, let me know", which forced him to inform them of his texting inbox.

"I also believed that you guys wouldn't kindly hand over such information to me as well."

Out of the girls gathered here, it wasn't just Sefi's supporters. There were also Freya's supporters who he had just met at the arena. Although he didn't understand the connection between them, Kurou did know that they were equally hostile towards him.

"I apologize about that, but to us, there was no way we could withstand having you win....."

The girl wearing the glasses was probably the one known as Neena. Although she spoke with her heart in her mouth, she suddenly pulled out her sword. Clearly she had a cowardly appearance, yet her actions were extremely dangerous.

Following that, Lima and the other girls also retrieved their swords.

They were probably in love with Sefi or Freya's sword. Someone who could beat those such as Sefi————it seems like they were already determined to eliminate their biggest obstacle in the elimination matches, Kurou.

Although they wouldn't kill, they probably did intend on slicing off one of his hands or something.

"I'll be your first opponent."

Lima positioned her sword and slowly advanced towards him.

"Kurou, we all realize you're very strong. However, even if I were to lose, there will be more of us waiting to battle you. Even you can't endure these battles forever."

"It's obvious that you want to win with numbers, hence you guys choose this repugnant battle style. It'd definitely be better if you guys all came at once."

"We are Swordies, we're not like you humans."

Lima explicitly stated.

Swordies extremely detested surprise attacks or attacking using superiority in numbers. During war or

within the public security forces such as the Sabers, that kind of stuff didn't really matter. However, if it was a battle among swordsmen, they would rigidly adhere to a proper attack. Using numbers to ambush him probably wasn't their intention.

Well then, what should he do to take down these ojou-samas without hurting them————

"Everyone get down!"

Suddenly, Kurou yelled out.

Kurou abruptly rushed towards Hinako's side and pressed down on her head to get her on the floor.

Ping, a coarse sound was heard throughout the warehouse.

Ping ping ping, following that, that same sound rang countless times. The girls let out screams of terror.

After that————

"What!?"

Lima lamented as such. As she fell back, she used her hands to press against the blood spraying out from her shoulder.

The girls were completely unsettled and timidly held their swords as their eyes shifted around.

“Nobody move!”

From the shadows of the contents within the warehouse came a group of people wearing white robes.

There were six of them in total, each with a rifle pointed towards Kurou and the other female students.

“The Sun Cult.....?”

Kurou muttered.

Since the people he saw were wearing white robes, this was without a doubt.

“If you guys follow our orders, we won’t take your lives! Our objective isn’t you guys.”

After the person was done speaking, another Sun Cult follower————this time it was a girl in nun attire who came out from the shadows.

The only one among the cultists who wielded a pistol ————it was the girl who escaped from Kurou before, Akari.

“What the, it’s you again.....”

“That’s my line! How come you show up before me every time.”

It would be quite perplexing to be nagged at at this point. This was where Kurou went to school, Akari’s arrival was the one out of the ordinary.

However, now was not the time to complain over such a thing.

“Neena, go treat Lima’s wounds for now. You have learned first aid procedures right?”

“Y-Yes.”

The glasses wearing girl, Neena, obediently nodded and ran towards Lima's side. As for why he ordered Neena to do that, she was probably the most stable minded among the girls.

"Jeez, you guys even brought out the guns which are regulated. This time it must be serious Akari."

"I'm always serious."

Akari carried her large .45 caliber pistol.

The other Sun Cultists were wielding rifles, specifically the M14 rifle which utilized larger caliber bullets. When facing the robust body of a Swordie, the M14's 7.62 mm caliber bullets would cause much more damage to the flesh than a high speed small caliber bullet passing through the body.

"We only have one objective and that is to retake the maiden of the sun."

"Do you wish to go back, maiden of the sun?"

"No."

Hinako replied in a hairsbreadth, denying Kurou's doubts.

In order to satisfy her curiosity, she escaped to here. Furthermore, it was absolutely certain that she still wasn't satisfied as of yet. Actually, even if she was satisfied, it would be hard to imagine her ever going back to the Sun Cult.

"Even though I feel quite sorry, your determination has nothing to do with any of this, so just come with us."

"Eh~, I don't want to."

Even though there was a gun pointed at her, Hinako remained unshaken. To be persistent in her ways to this extent really left others at wit's end.

"And with that, can you guys please go away? If you leave now, I'll let you guys go."

"What's with your carefree attitude? You bastard, don' t you understand the situation!?"

Akari agitatedly spoke.

It was just as she said, there was no call for optimism in this situation. There were six rifles along with a pistol. The girl students were trembling and appeared to be out of commission.

"I've heard that the Sun Cult had settled down a bit, but I guess you guys were simply attempting a rescue operation with a small band of elite members. Well, I suppose this is an ordinary course of action. However,

those rifles, you guys must have been spent a lot of effort to attain those. Those hard earned firearms must be relinquished here, it'd be silly if you didn't right?"

"Enough nonsense! Alright, please hand over the maiden of the sun to us! We are the ones who determine whether or not to let you guys go!"

"Ha?"

Kurou wryly smiled and drew out his katana.

The rifle carrying Sun Cultists were instantly awestruck. They probably never would have thought he would immediately pull out his sword.

"Akari.....actually, it appears all of you Sun Cultists haven't grasped what kind of person I am. Do I have to kill till the last alive to make you guys understand?"

"Y-You....."

The pistol Akari was holding up was shaking a bit. Although she was still very young, who knows how many difficult trials she has been through. She must have detected Kurou's killing intent.

"Hurry up and take care of them. Since there's no other choice, I'll have to lend a hand."

"S-Sefi-sama!"

The girls all let out a gasp of surprise.

Who knows when Sefi had been standing next to Hinako. With her hand gripping the Stardust, she entered her battle stance.

"That massive sword, it's perfect for a shield."

"That's not what it's used for....."

Towards Hinako's nonchalant statement, Sefi revealed a discontent expression.

"Although I have no idea what you guys were up to, I do owe you a favor from when that black robed girl attacked. I wish to return the favor here is all."

"Ah, is that so."

Hinako tilted her head and spoke with a blank stare.

Actually, when they were under attack by the mystic arts using girl, Hinako's words changed the course of battle. Feeling as though she owed a favor from that time , Sefi really paid scrupulous attention to details.

"Hey, Sefi.....sama, why are you here?"

"T-That's because you and that maid girl disappeared before I knew it.....actually, this doesn't matter at all! It was just by coincidence!"

Kurou thought that her fumbling of lies was a favorable thing. Even though she loved to flaunt around, in actuality her candidness always did show up.

"Did you follow Kuro here?"

Even Hinako saw through her. Sefi was still backing that lie of hers that had already been seen through. However Lima and Neena were also here, to not openly admit it under these circumstances was also understandable.

"Enough, please hurry up and get rid of those humans ! If you can't do it then I'll do it myself!"

"No no, how can I allow Princess-sama to be inconvenienced like this."

Kurou smiled as he declined her. Actually, he still had to watch out for stray bullets when dealing with long range enemies. Having Sefi guard Hinako as well would be difficult, but following this.....

"Well then, let me take care of it. No need to worry Kurou, just do your thing."

"....."

At some point, Lars had also arrived standing alongside the students. He clearly wasn't tracking Kurou, but nevertheless he came. This guy sure had keen senses.

"Now hold on, Lars should help a bit too. What are you doing back there."

"Haha, enough joking around. With this, Kurou can do as he pleases and go all out."

"....."

Kurou was fixated on Lars's leery smile.

It wasn't just his keen sense, it was also remarkable how he was so observant. However, what he had said was accurate.

"Well, with that I don't need to worry about my surroundings————let's take care of this situation without letting them get away."

"Hold on you bastard. I said that as long as you don't move I won't shoot.....!"

As Akari was panic-stricken, Kurou took action.

There was probably no one here who could discern Kurou's movements as he took off. At the very least, none of the Sun Cultists holding rifles could respond in time.

"!"

"......!"

As two of the Sun Cultists soundlessly lamented while blood spurted from their face and neck, they toppled over on the ground. Even with rifles, they couldn't even respond in time to pull the trigger.

"H-Huh....."

"W-What!"

The other Sun Cultists blankly stared at their fallen comrades who were instantly taken out. After returning to their senses, they aimed their guns at Kurou. Kurou wasn't even three meters away from the other cultists. With that distance, they could even attack with their eyes closed and still hit their target.

"What a drag."

Kurou brazenly smiled and charged forth without delay. In a flash————

As one of the cultists pressed the rifle's trigger, Kurou severed his hand. Next, he struck again, slashing his carotid artery.

Without pause, he then diagonally hacked at someone, and as another person was about to fire, he cut through the body of the gun. While the cultist was broken from his stance, Kurou then pierced through his heart.

This entire series did not even take ten seconds.

Kurou pulled the katana out of the cultist's body and shook it to remove the blood.

"How nice of you to reveal those guns. That said, why did the entire group walk up front. If you guys possessed long distance weapons, why not just have one or two shoot from long range. Are you guys stupid?"

"Guh....."

Even though Akari was brimming with tears, she did not even retort him as she stepped back.

To the church, these rifles must have been considered as treasures. Since these were even handed to them, it must have been because they were the elite. However, having not gauged the proper distance for the battle engagement was due to their inadequate training. Kurou on the other hand, picked up techniques on how to deal with firearms from his training with the Sword Saint and the Sabers. As a result, they were unworthy of being Kurou's opponents.

"By the way.....if you came here to take away that child, then don't attack these girl students who are not involved."

Kurou sharply glared at Akari and the other remaining Sun Cultist.

In fact, Kurou had no reason to protect Lima. However , he couldn't turn his back towards the unexpected calamity that had befallen these people.

"W-We only wished to frighten them a bit.....no wait! To us, Swordies are the enemy! None of them can be be let off the hook!

Akari aimed her pistol directly towards Kurou's head.

"Plus, I don't wish to hear any boasting from the likes of you! Clearly a human siding with the Swordies.....you 're a traitor, you monster!"

".....Traitor? Monster?"

Kurou was instantly dumbfounded, but followed that up with a smirk.

Regardless of him being treated as a traitor or as a monster, these were things he had gotten used to.

Although he was a human, he decided to live among Swordie society. Despite being a human, he had the strength to overcome Swordies in battle.

“Don’t decide for yourself.”

Kurou eyed Akari and then shook his head.

Although he could understand, it was hard to approve of.

“Akari, I’ve grown weary of being referred to as a traitor. As things stand, I no longer care about how others view me. However, there is this passionately curious girl here so perhaps it’s an opportune time to explain why I’m 'on the Swordie’s side'."

Nobody moved.

Perhaps they had all realized. Right now, if there was even the slightest suspicious movement, Kurou would instantly have them killed.

“My father, was executed by humans.”

Kurou hadn’t told this to anyone before.

With an empty soul, he spoke only to explain the facts, as if it was all irrelevant to him.

Kurou's dad was a researcher who studied Swordies.

His analysis seemed to be about the habits and characteristics of Swordies as a living being. With that as a foundation, he then studied their culture.

Kurou did not really understand the specifics of it. However, no matter how one looked at it Kurou was separated from his dad after he died when he was only seven years of age.

Despite this, Kurou did know that his dad frequently visited the Specialized Central Region seeking acquaintance with the Swordies and conversed with them.

Based on what Kurou remembered about his dad, the house was pretty much a library since he was surrounded by books daily as he happily trudged through all his documents. He didn't particularly watch over his son. When Kurou had grown up a bit, his

mother was already gone without any indication as to what she was doing or where she was. It wasn't withheld from Kurou, but perhaps he displayed no interest towards this.

"Despite this, we still lived a normal life. However, the peacefulness vanished all within a day. It was because——————a rebellion suddenly surfaced."

Eight years ago in the district Kurou lived in, a government controlled specialists squad was sent in to attack.

An anti-Swordie cadre was reported to be gathered in a certain apartment room within the district. A raid involving elite members, which included the Sword Saint , should have been able to wipe them out handily.

However, the armed forces and police were already within the district at the time and so were most of the anti-Swordie group members who had banded together. The number was said to be around two to three thousand people in total.

The worst part of it was, there were loads of firearms smuggled from out of the country and gathered at the stronghold. The few members involved in the raid received an unimaginable counterattack.

The anti-Swordie organization surrounded the raiding group and attacked. Although the government instantly sent reinforcements, the situation had already gotten out of hand.

"The riot lasted for probably two or three hours. Just as me and my dad were done packing our bags in order to escape, the door to our house was suddenly opened————and fully armed individuals charged in."

Kurou still clearly remembered the scene.

His dad was only a researcher and wasn't capable of handling this kind of danger. The armed militants that charged in pointed their guns towards his dad and dragged him out.

"The door was opened just enough to have a clear view of it through a small crevice. I saw my dad with a gun pointed to his head————and getting shot."

Intentionally taking his dad outside to be publicly executed was probably meant to warn others that " anyone associated with Swordies will end up like this."

Of course, at that time Kurou did not understand the extent of their intentions.

However, he swiftly realized his father was here no longer. Furthermore, he would be in danger as well if he were to stay in the house.

Kurou took with him a notebook that was highly important to his dad and stuffed it in his travel bag. After that, he jumped out of a window and escaped.

As he was sprinting across the streets that rang with gunfire————the young Kurou already clearly realized that he could never return home again. He also understood the reality of this brutality.

"I can't be considered as a comrade of the Swordies, but I have no reason to stand by humans anymore."

Kurou had not forgotten in the least bit about the rebellion eight years ago.

Just because his father was killed by humans didn't mean he truly shunned all humans though.

"If that was it, simply put I'd probably just be an obscure human. However, there was more....."

Indeed, the situation had not completely ended.

Kurou ran into her by chance.

That————terrifying, yet beautiful sword dancer.

"Sword Saint Hyouka.....I believe she was the woman who suppressed the rebellion eight years ago."

Akari gulped as she heard that.

"It was precisely as such, I recall all of it clearly. The remaining people left from that rebellion are practically all within the Sun Cult now I bet."

Although Kurou was certain on these matters, he didn't detest the Sun Cult as a whole. Even if he were to locate the criminals who killed his father, he most likely wouldn't slay them if it wasn't part of his mission.

"I witnessed what a true monster was like. The moment I encountered that person, she had obliterated everything I had. No————it was all cut into pieces."

The young Kurou wanted to distance himself from the sound of gunfire. However, he actually got lost and found himself nearing the center of the battle.

"Initially when I witnessed that scene it gave the impression of a scene from hell. Human corpses covered in blood were scattered all over the place.....however, I was immediately captivated by that person———— Sword Saint Hyouka's blade dancing figure had me spellbound."

Her long blue hair danced in the wind and she was wearing a small black dress. With one wave of the sword , she calmly marched forth.

Dozens of armed militants fired hundreds of rounds in her direction.

The shattering gunfire could be heard in all directions. The ground and nearby structures were laced with bullet markings. However, those bullets didn't even graze a hair on her body. It was as if the bullets all glanced by her.

She paid no heed to the gun onslaught. Like flowing water, she shifted around with total poise within the group of militants, slashing all of them to death. They didn't even have to time to lament, having already breathed one's last.

Even as he witnessed the loss of life one by one, Kurou did not feel it was tragic in the least bit. Rather, he even felt it was a resplendent sight.

No matter how many she killed, there was no stop to her.

It even seemed as if she was going to exterminate every single human on earth.

"In the depths of my heart I felt————fear."

To this day, Kurou had not witnessed anyone's swordsmanship surpass hers on that day.

"She was truly a monster. Whether it was humans or even Swordies, Sword Saint Hyouka had transcended the limits of them all."

"Y-You are.....the Sword Saint's disciple right? I-I too know about your situation."

As Akari was backtracking, it seemingly took all her effort just to utter those lines.

"In that case, why did you become the Sword Saint's disciple? Why did you side with the Swordies?"

"So I wouldn't be killed by the Sword Saint."

Kurou immediately replied.

"If I was still living, then I felt eventually she would have me slayed as well. The Sword Saint only came here to suppress the rebellion and did not see a child like me as her enemy. As a result, I simply overreacted. Since I didn't want to be killed by the Sword Saint and in order to defeat her, I went to the Sword Saint's side. Basically at that time, something about my soul was already broken."

"......Such unusual reasoning."

Even if Akari did not mention it, Kurou was aware of it himself.

To the broken down soul of a child, seeing the Sword Saint's figure on that day was already more than enough. Thinking about it right now, why did he decide to become the Sword Saint's disciple? The obvious choice would have been to run away.

In the end, the Sword Saint had wiped out the entirety of the anti-government group members who stood in her way. Although there was no way to kill all the hundreds of enemies that were there, at least the momentum of the anti-government organization was stymied by her sword .

"Akari, you guys should retreat. I'll let you guys go just this once."

Kurou stoically announced. He had already suppressed the flames of fury that arose when Lima was attacked.

"W-What are you saying all of a sudden.....we came all the way over here, and with where things stand right now, how can we return empty-handed!?"

"You're wrong. You're not a misfit like me Akari. You are apologetic to those who are not involved in the attack . This is confirmation that you still possess the heart of a human."

As Kurou stated, he pointed towards Hinako.

"Look at that child. She doesn't know any better yet she relied on her own determination————she came over here to see the outside world. Wanting to return this child, can you honestly say that is the right thing to do?"

".....T-There's nothing right or wrong about it."

"I won't let anyone here pursue you guys. The Sun Cult will always stage a comeback regardless how many times we stop them. 'The sun is still rising', I believe that's the creed you guys have. No matter what, under these circumstances the chances of winning for you guys are already nonexistent. Also, there's something I wish to have you guys pass on to the Sun Cult's big shot."

"W-What would that be.....?"

"As long as I'm here, this child will never return to the Sun Cult. If they have the confidence to defeat the monster's disciple, they can come at me whenever."

Kurou pointed the end of his sword towards Akari.

Facing the Sun Cultists by himself wasn't just the result of being enraged from Lima being attacked.

If he were to delegate the task to Lars or Sefi, they would probably show no remorse in killing every single member.

Kurou did not plan on taking it easy on the cultists either. However, he could see that the nun outfit wearing girl named Akari still lacked an adequate understanding.

He wished to not kill an opponent like this at all costs.

As a result, as Kurou was fixated on her, he also prayed within his heart.

Please just retreat.

Kurou stared straight into Akari's eyes, waiting for her next action. A stream of tears flowed down for her. Looks like Akari was a girl who had a tendency to cry.

As he was waiting, he pondered over something.

He was far from a monster.

If he was a monster, then he probably would not have wanted to protect Hinako.

Letting Akari off the hook would have been even more unimaginable.

He wasn't a monster, but if he wasn't a Swordie either, then perhaps him even being human was doubtful.

So what in the world was he then?

Kurou had already lost interest in Akari and was instead preoccupied with another suspicion of his———
—

Under the setting sun, a frosty breeze blew by.

Although it was April, it would often feel frigid once the sun started to set. Especially today, it seemed the temperature sharply plummeted.

Kurou had Hinako alongside him. They were currently on the way back to the hut.

“Those guys retreated without any trouble surprisingly.”

Hinako suddenly muttered.

Akari and the remaining Sun Cultist instantly withdrew after Kurou finished speaking. Since no commotions arose, they must have avoided being interrogated as they left.

“Those guys aren’t necessarily idiots. If anyone were to pester endlessly in that situation, that’s pretty much asking to be killed.”

“After retreating, could they ever return to having a normal life.....”

"This kind of worrying is hypocritical. Frankly speaking, if you didn't escape in that situation, you'd be living a normal life like those dead Sun Cultists."

".....Jeez, you're quite blunt about it."

Hinako did not seem to have suffered any particular hits.

However, that doesn't mean she didn't have her own thoughts on this matter. She probably possessed some awareness for these types of situations.

"Perhaps what was done to those people who were killed was unfavorable. However, even with this————I have no regrets about coming to the outside world."

"There's no reason for you to be forced to pass your days under house arrest right? Those people that I killed all held rifles. Even you probably understand that they were putting their lives on the line."

".....Even so, it's still the first time I've seen Kurou kill others."

"If I'm going to continue being your bodyguard, then you'll witness this many times from now on. From the

looks of it, you seem to be quite an important person to the Sun Cult."

Kurou did not feel any regret towards killing the Sun Cultists. Had he not killed them, his own life would be in jeopardy. Furthermore, protecting Hinako was part of Kurou's job, there was no need to anguish over this.

Taking care of the Sun Cultists' corpses and the paperwork for Lima to be hospitalized was handed over to Lars. Although that was the case, he was a descendent of the four generals. Delegating these miscellaneous tasks to others wasn't particularly cumbersome for him.

"However, today turned out pretty good.....I mean, bad. Those guys are really quite something to be able to invade this academy. Is there someone here leading them along?"

After suffering those previous attacks, the school's inner security received a strong boost. Although there were still many flaws, they had snuck in way too easily. Perhaps checking the identity of everyone within the academy would be ideal.

"It's still far from over."

"That's to be expected."

"If Kuro is able to protect me.....at the very least, I can see things to the end with my own eyes."

"My task will probably continue on as well. Even if it's me, perhaps I might die tomorrow, you never know. 'I'll keep protecting you forever', I can't say something I can't bear the responsibility for."

".....Is that so."

Hinako slightly lowered her head.

She seemed reluctant to accept Kurou's protection, but even she knew she was slightly dependent on him. Perhaps he should respond with what was to be expected in order for her to be at ease.

However, "I'll protect you"——a quick reply as such would not suffice.

Although it was regrettable, Kurou was not a true monster.

Compared to those who would turn the whole world into their enemy and kill incessantly, he was different.

Kurou raised his head and gazed towards the gradually darkening sky.

Along with the mysterious assailant, even the Sun Cultists didn't give up without a fight.

For a person like him who can't even be considered as a monster, nothing could describe him then. Still, Kurou seemingly will never have a shortage of enemies whom he will have to cross swords with.

Chapter 4 - A Kiss to the Sword

The curtains were raised for the second day of the elimination matches.

What was shocking was things went about as usual as if yesterday's disturbance within the warehouse never happened. The elimination matches stayed on track and resumed as usual.

Because of the agreement between Kurou and the Sun Cultists, they did not pursue them. In consideration of Lima's honor, the matter of her being wounded by a human was never disclosed. However, it was quite unimaginable that the incident's follow up was conducted in a way as if nothing ever occurred.

Lars's cover up of the incident was quite horrifying. You wouldn't want this guy as your enemy.

".....However, this is such a pain. The waiting time is so long."

Kurou heaved a heavy sigh.

At the assembly place where the elimination matches were held, there was a lounge accessible to the many

participants waiting on their matches. Kurou and Hinako were just staring on as they sat on a couch within a corner of the lounge.

"Kuro is really quite laid-back."

"I don't need to hear it from you."

"However, everyone else seems to be in a nervous wreck."

The students who were about to take the stage stayed close to the side of the lounge that was towards the arena . As a result, an air of tension clouding over that place was probably to be expected.

"It's now round three, the competition has become more fierce. Everyone has probably forgotten about the assault incident already."

"Even those words sound quite carefree. Eh? That said , I haven't seen Sefi or Lars."

"I already told you, don't directly call them by their names. Also, since when did you start directly addressing Sefi-sama by her name as well?"

Hinako was too unsophisticated in these matters. It didn't matter much for a guy like Lars, but if she were to call Sefi, who was the princess of the four generals and possessed outstanding swordsmanship, by her name directly, then it would cause a huge commotion. Although that was the case, no matter how many times he warned Hinako it was probably a fruitless endeavor.

"Jeez.....since Lars always wanders off as he pleases, even I have no clue where that guy is. However, there's a special lounge for distinguished students so perhaps Sefi-sama should be in there."

If your grade was good, it would result in better treatment. Since this school was organized by competing for ranks, it wasn't a bad thing to bestow special treatment to those with superior grades.

"Ah, it's Sefi's turn."

Hinako was watching the large display screen installed in the lounge as she spoke.

The large display screen broadcasted multiple sections of the arena, allowing it to capture many matches occurring at once.

"Can Sefi win?"

"Last time during the tournament she attained third place. As long as she doesn't fool around she won't lose."

As he was saying this, Sefi's wooden sword heavily struck her opponent's shoulder and the wooden sword fell out of her opponent's hands. Just as he was considering whether or not the girl looked a bit shaken up————she toppled over. She hadn't lost her fighting spirit from the beginning, but her body was unable to withstand Sefi's attack.

Sefi comforted her opponent and then departed from the tournament stage. She was very gentle towards her own gender. If only she was that gentle towards me as well, Kurou thought along these lines.

"It still isn't Kuro's turn yet?"

"No, there's still around ten minutes left."

Kurou responded while being fixated on the display screen. It was just as he said, once at round three, those that were present were all the students with excellent

swordsmanship. They weren't fully developed yet but after two or three years, who knows to what extent they would mature to.

Although there were Swordies who blossomed early on, there were also many who developed slowly. Among those kinds of people, they could perhaps become one of the Seven Swords of the future as well.

Kurou suddenly recalled, if the number one ranked student from year one, Migune, was still alive————

"Ahhh————!"

Suddenly, the cry of a girl's voice sounded from somewhere.

Kurou did not spare a moment of hesitation. He grabbed the hand of Hinako, who blankly stared on, and ran out.

Everyone within the lounge had heard the cry, however Kurou was the fastest one to respond.

Kurou held Hinako's hand and raced towards the sound of the cry.

Although it was quite a foolish thing for a bodyguard to specifically lead the person he was guarding to peril, Kurou would rather confront the danger than run away.

Based on the circumstances, in many cases he had to actively eliminate the danger factors to create a safer environment as opposed to running away. Kurou judged based on his own intuition, hence having fallen under this state.

Afterwards, they ran through the intricate paths leading around the arena.

As Kurou and Hinako arrived at the entrance of a room, there were many female students gathered around and chattering away indistinctly.

Kurou instantly noticed the red colored liquid flowing out from the room to where he was standing.

As he made his way through the crowd of female students and caught a gander of what was in the room, he noticed that what was lying there was just as he expected.

It was a girl covered in blood.

Although her face laid downwards, there wasn't even a need to confirm who it was.

The number two ranked swordswoman, Freya, was dead.

"All of a sudden, a strange person stormed into the room ....."

One of Freya's supporters, with tears in her eyes, stated as such.

In order to inquire more about the situation, Kurou brought one of the girls standing by Freya's corpse out of the lounge. Right now, gathering information was absolutely essential.

However, she appeared to be inattentive towards Kurou who was asking her questions. She was still in a state of confusion so grasping the main points of her explanation proved quite difficult.

Even so, this was what he understood after organizing what she had said: When Freya was in the lounge, she was ambushed and killed with one strike.

“She appeared to be wearing.....black, loose fitting clothing. I couldn’t discern her appearance due to the hood she was wearing.....”

“Is that so.”

Basically, it must have been the same arts user that Kurou had encountered a couple days ago or perhaps an accomplice of hers.

The number one ranked student of his grade, Migune, was murdered, the third ranked Sefi was attacked, and now the second ranked Freya was killed. The chances of her targets being the exceptional students were quite high.

What if, the arts user wanted to conveniently finish the task left undone from a couple days ago after she slayed Freya————

“Tch.”

Kurou clicked his tongue and hightailed off once again while pulling Hinako along.

However, he instantly stopped in his tracks and returned to the sobbing girl. Kurou then grabbed her shoulders.

“People are gathering here due to the fervent crowd. Freya probably wouldn’t want herself to be seen like this. Forget about the safety of this crowd for now, just have her body set down properly and cover her with a blanket .”

After the girl confirmed with a nod of the head, Kurou set off once again.

Although it felt like Hinako wished to say something, Kurou remained silent as they continued to dash forward . They only knew Freya from their brief conversation so their silence wasn’t because either of them were in deep sorrow over her loss.

Despite that, Kurou wanted to protect Freya’s honor. That was all the reason he needed considering this was expected from him.

Furthermore, he must put an end to the number of victims. Thus, he had no choice but to immediately head towards his destination.

"....."

However, Hinako wasn't a fast runner. It was obvious that she didn't have adequate exercise since she had always been imprisoned in a Sun Cult facility. Nevertheless, there was no way he could just ditch her.

"Kurou-kun."

"What!?"

Suddenly, from the corner of his vision came a girl wearing a red long coat————it was Manaka.

Kurou stopped and unwaveringly stared at his boss.

"Manaka, what are you doing here?"

"Oh nothing. I received an invitation from the principal asking if I would like to watch the elimination matches. Furthermore, I also had to send two squads over to the academy out of courtesy, and I was told that '

the students would be quite happy if one of the Seven Swords could come', so there's various reasons why I'm here. That said, why are you in such a hurry?"

"I don't have the leisure to explain right now. However, you came at the perfect time. Please take this child off my hands for now."

"Ha? You're asking me? You want me to train her to have your favored tsundere attribute?"

"Why would I request my boss for something like that!? I'm asking if you would take my place as her bodyguard for now. Taking her somewhere where there's a lot of people would probably be more suitable. Well then, I'll be taking my leave!"

Kurou did not even wait for Manaka's response and just handed her Hinako.

Although it was very unexpected that Manaka would come here to watch the competition, it could only be said as good fortune for him. There was probably no one more suitable than having her take his place as that child's bodyguard.

However, there were still matters that needed to be attended to————

"He left....."

Hinako muttered while gazing at the pathway that Kurou swiftly ran through.

"It all developed into a complete mess rather quickly....."

"Kurou-kun has already trained to his limits as a human————even with his Olden Style, he can never stride past the disparity in terms of physical capabilities against a Swordie. He might even be the strongest among all humans."

That was probably quite the exaggeration still. Although, Hinako kept this thought to herself. She had absolutely no understanding of his physical capability.

"That said, he has some nerve to be pushing his own work onto his boss! That bastard is really undaunted."

"Sefi is really important to him. Kurou highly values her even though it clearly isn't part of his work."

"That guy went to Sefi's place? I've noticed that things are a bit rowdy around here, what in the world happened?"

Hinako roughly explained the incident regarding Freya. Hinako guessed that Kurou had probably figured the enemy had their sights set on Sefi, thus he ran towards her location.

".....Oh, the incident occurred once again? In that case , there's probably no chance of them being able to conceal themselves within the academy anymore. It may turn into a more catastrophic situation. Guess I'll be busied with this as well. Alright alright, what should we do next ____"

"......?"

Hinako looked at Manaka as she tilted her head.

No matter what, wasn't the job of the Sabers to find the assailants and arrest them? Or was this situation handed over to the police to deal with?

"Haha, no need to worry. Compared to this.....it is really quite awful of Kurou-kun. No matter how cute Sefi is, for him to have thrown you aside is really....."

"This precisely demonstrates how important Sefi is to him. Is it due to the difference in the amount of time acquainted?"

"Is that so. I don't quite understand dating and such, especially if it is between a Swordie and a human. It is possible for humans to marry Swordies since they can still bear children, however relationships between Swordies and humans are rarely seen. They'd eventually go through many hardships."

Manaka seemed to really sympathize for Kurou and Sefi.

It wasn't just the difference in race between Kurou and Sefi, there were plenty of other obstacles. Even Hinako felt that was the case.

"By the way, Kurou hasn't made a move on you yet? I've even gone through the trouble of giving you nice clothes."

Manaka overtly gazed at Hinako's voluptuous chest and her soft legs.

"I'm also quite fascinated at the concept of making love."

Hinako calmly endured Manaka's line of sight and faintly mentioned.

"Kurou hasn't done anything to me. He didn't seek out my undergarments and never even peeked in as I was bathing."

"Really? That's pretty lame. I wasn't sure if Kurou-kun would be motivated in guarding you. I basically thought if he were to make a move on you, then he'd take his bodyguard assignment more diligently."

Manaka had her arms folded as she began pondering.

It was quite difficult to imagine Hinako ever being together with someone like Manaka who was one of the Swordie's strongest Seven Swords. She gave the impression of an older sister improperly dealing with boredom.

"Well, there's nothing we can do either way. If that side fails then it'd be perfect. That means we can make some progress over here."

"What side do you mean?"

"About that, just·wait·and·see."

With Manaka's statement possessing some sort of implication, Hinako blinked in response.

Hinako was immediately dumbfounded————

"……?"

Suddenly, an overwhelming pressure came at her.

Against this astounding power that was hard to stand up against————Hinako felt as if everything in front of her was violently shaking.

Meanwhile, just as a precaution, he had already checked on the lounge where Sefi was.

During the elimination tournament, Sefi had supporters by her side and as a result, Kurou felt there was no need to be overly concerned about her. However,

Freya was pretty much under the same circumstances when she was killed, thus it showed how naive his thinking was.

Kurou mustered all his effort in running towards the front of Sefi's lounge. Without a shred of hesitation, he forcefully opened the door.

"Sefi!"

"......Eh?"

A splendid scene awaited Kurou on the other side of the door.

Sefi, who was only wearing an aqua blue bra on top, was drying herself off with a towel. Since the skirt to her uniform was raised, her legs were completely exposed.

Tiny beads of sweat covered her flushed red face. From the valley of those two swells, her slender waistline , and supple legs, it all emitted a peculiar seductive aura.

No, right now was not the time to be getting excited over this stuff.

“Thank goodness Sefi.”

“H-Hold on.....!”

Kurou tightly hugged Sefi’s body. Her skin was tender and smooth, her body heat even faintly transferred over.

“I’m so glad you’re ok. For a moment I was thinking what would become of you.....”

“W-What are you doing.....what made you do something like this, there must be a reason!?”

“It’s fine as long as you’re ok.”

"It's not fine!"

Once Sefi returned to her senses, she forcefully separated herself from Kurou's body. Under these circumstances, it was plain to see that Kurou's strength could not resist that of a Swordie's.

"What is this all of a sudden you idiot."

Sefi swiftly put on the shirt to her uniform and promptly combed her hair. Her face was in a blush and her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Looks like if I don't explain first....."

Kurou concisely briefed her of Freya's situation. He also explained that he thought the attacker might come towards Sefi as well so that was why he hurried over here.

"......Freya's dead? No way, how could something like this happen in school?"

"Although it's quite regrettable, it is the truth. Sefi, are you by yourself? Where are your supporters?"

"Since I wanted to concentrate on the match beforehand, I sent my friends off. I had thought that the attacker wouldn't be stupid enough to come here with all the people gathered in the room....."

"That's what I thought as well. However, the opposition doesn't seem to care about how things turn out. For now, let's leave. Sefi, do you have the Starbreaker on you?"

"Yeah, I had it just in case. Where do you plan on heading?"

Sefi grabbed the Starbreaker that was leaning against the wall in the corner of the room as she asked.

"Perfect, Manaka is here as well. Although she always makes me feel a bit gloomy, there's no safer place than by her side."

"That's true."

Despite her attitude, Manaka was someone worthy of being one of the Seven Swords. One or two arts users were probably no big deal.

Kurou and Sefi both walked out of the lounge and scurried along the path. They kept a close watch on all sides as Kurou retrieved his cellphone to call Manaka.

"......Hmm?"

Since Manaka was pretty negligent, having forgotten her cellphone elsewhere was very possible. For now, they could only head towards where he last parted from Manaka.

"Hey, Kurou."

"What is it?"

Kurou put the cellphone back in his pocket as he replied.

"Even if it's a time like this.....please forget about that matter from before."

"What are you talking about?"

Seeing Sefi's face, he noticed that she hastily avoided his line of sight and blushed. This girl who was holding that ridiculously gargantuan sword revealed an embarrassed expression. How unusual.

"What I meant was.....t-that matter regarding when I attacked you, you should just erase that sort of thing from your memory."

"Ah. You see, there's been a lot of things happening recently."

"Y-You're right. However, please just forget about it. I must have been in a daze at the time. It's because it has been a long time since I last witnessed Kurou's sword so I just got a bit excited is all. It's got nothing to do with being captivated or anything."

As Sefi's face turned red, she rapidly spoke with a barrage of words.

"Please forget all of that. I-I.....also.....did that thing with you. Just erase the memory of what was pretty much a dog bite!"

"What dog, hey."

Of course, she was most likely referring to the kiss.

"Even if you tell me to disregard it————that impactful experience is hard to overlook."

Kurou was an exceedingly aberrant individual, but despite this he was still just a fifteen year-old teenager. After kissing a beauty like Sefi, it was impossible to pretend nothing had happened.

"It was an impactful experience.....y-you haven't..... kissed that girl yet?"

"That girl? Haha, oh you mean her. N-No way, I haven 't even laid a finger on her."

This he could swear to god. Although they were living under the same roof, for Kurou to even visually take pleasure in Hinako was a bit worrying.

"I-I see. So you haven't done anything to her, not bad not bad. Nevertheless, it'd be pitiful if the number of victims increased."

"So you're saying you want to have all of the sexual harassment to yourself....."

"I never said such a thing! Jeez————"

Sefi suddenly tensed up.

Practically at the same time, Kurou ceased smiling and narrowed his eyes as he attentively gazed towards the front.

".....There's a person. I don't sense anyone except that one individual."

"Rou....."

Kurou used his finger to gesture Sefi who wanted to head forward.

From around the corner ten or so meters away from them, the sound of footsteps could be heard.

"Is the person coming out?"

With the sound of the footsteps, out came someone in the corner of their vision————it was the black robed suspicious figure from before. Just like back then, she had a hood draped over her head which concealed her appearance.

The robed arts user drew her sword without uttering a word. The slender blade was enveloped in a faint white light.

Kurou also pulled out his katana and set it into its usual upright stance.

“Rou, today I’ll.....”

“Stand down. In these narrow pathways, it’d be hard to engage in battle with two people at once. Furthermore, matches against Swordies are pretty much one-on-ones right?”

“Oh.....”

After Sefi faintly muttered, she took a few steps back. Even if she wasn’t going to enter battle, backing off a bit was beneficial to Kurou.

Suddenly, the arts user took action. She hopped up like a spring, instantly closing in ten meters, and then she swung her sword.

“.....!”

Kurou unwaveringly parried the arts user’s strike and took advantage of this opportunity to slash the opponent ’s shoulder. Following that, he felt the sensation of cutting through flesh.

"What.....!?"

Although it was a shallow wound he had suddenly inflicted with a slash after easily deflecting her first strike , it made the arts user unmistakably tremble.

However, the arts user's bewilderment was only for an instant. Immediately after, she hurriedly readjusted her stance. As she moved her body in a dance-like motion——

Instantly, a six slash strike came speeding at him. The attack which involved the white light enshrouded light blade flashed like a shooting star.

Confronted with these continual attacks that would cut him up into pieces, Kurou had deflected all of them.

That kind of masterful technique resulted in the sound of multiple blade clashes that rang one right after another .

"Guh.....!"

The arts user uttered indistinctly and staggeringly backed off. The left side of her abdomen was bleeding.

After Kurou blocked the six strikes, with the next strike, he had stabbed the arts user's flank.

"Tch, it's still not deep enough. Well, looks like this matter can't be resolved so easily."

Although she had been stabbed in the abdomen, it was absolutely not deep enough to reach her internal organs. If it was a Swordie, they should be good enough to continue battling.

"....."

Although the arts user's expression couldn't really be seen, her anxiousness was very noticeable. Perhaps to her , that last six strike attack was a must-kill technique. At any rate, having that maneuver be effortlessly blocked by Kurou and having been counterattacked, it must have been completely unexpected to her.

"There's nothing to be astonished about right? My Olden Style, simply put the principle behind it is just reading your opponent's attacks while not letting them be able to read yours. This is the second time you're battling me so I'm already able to read your sword maneuvers. Of course, even after a hundred battles you'll still never be able to understand my swordsmanship.

Since you were unable to deal with me during our first battle, you should have never appeared in front of me again."

Kurou wryly smiled.

Swordies didn't put all their strength into wielding a sword, rather it was being able to read their opponent as they battled. However, Kurou turned the tables by having unpredictable movements————in other words , he used an exceedingly rudimentary theory to derive his unpredictable swordsmanship for combat engagement.

From a Swordie's perspective, from the gesture of Kurou's sword and its movements, it would deviate from the trajectory that they predicted and come at them in an unanticipated speed. If their swordsmanship and opportunities to strike had been thrown into utter disorder, then it would even be hard for a Swordie's physical capabilities to counter Kurou's swordsmanship.

An intriguing, indiscernible swordsmanship————that was the truth behind Kurou's blade.

However, based on the words from the arts user, she must have thought there had to be some trick behind it. Kurou's sword maneuvers were not limitless.

If they were to reach a hundred battles, those maneuvers should become readable right? If it did reach that extent, Kurou's sword wielding should appear identical to that of other humans in the face of a Swordie's capabilities.

Nevertheless, it was impossible to battle someone a hundred times, especially if those combats involved real weapons.

"You have lost, arts user."

However, under a situation where he held supremacy, this line could become the chains to the opponent's shackles. Kurou knew this because he had personally experienced this on his own body.

Following that, Kurou had remembered.

He had been chained by these same words in a distant past.

"Thou hast already lost, Kurou."

Sword Saint Hyouka cheerfully stated towards her disciple who disgracefully had his sword knocked to the ground.

Kurou pressed against his hand as he gazed towards the katana that had been sent flying a couple meters away. He tightly bit his lips. He understood he was clearly defeated, but having this mentioned to him made him feel as if he was slayed.

Almost seven years had passed since he became Hyouka's disciple and embarked on training deep into the mountains with her.

The mountains were solely chosen as a place for training. Except for the small hut he lived in with the Sword Saint, there weren't any other man-made structures. Nearly every day involved crossing swords with authentic swords by a small stream next to the hut. This sort of thing would repeat itself daily.

When he first started training, the katana was so heavy to him that he couldn't even lift it up. By the time he was fourteen years of age, he was able to wield the sword as if it was a natural part of his movements.

However, that all amounts to nothing if all he could do was wield it.

"That's far from adequate Kurou. Just because you can beat Sylphy's little sister you think you're something else ? My disciple beating that kind of blondie brat is to be expected you idiot."

Hyouka arrogantly stated. Furthermore, her manner of speaking felt a bit outdated. However, she had always been like this.

Kurou thought she must have been influenced by some sort of contemporary drama as he stared at her.

Hyouka was a young woman in her twenties. Akin to a geisha, she wore a bright cherry colored kimono with the chest region greatly sticking out. Those massive supple mounds of hers were practically half exposed.

Her blue hair extended down her back and that neatly done appearance of hers gave the impression of a cat. At times she was amiable, but sometimes it was as if she was a monster fiercely eying her prey's flesh. Her expressions were constantly alternating.

Her attitude left a deep impression, but it probably contrasted greatly between person to person. However, certainly no one would ever forget about her upon seeing her once. She was this kind of woman who left a lasting impression on others.

"I'm already tired of being your master or whatever, just how long are you going to make me work Kurou?"

Hyouka hoisted her katana which was the same type as Kurou's over her shoulder as she spoke. She was one of the few Swordies who utilized a katana. Except, this wasn't her personalized sword, it was merely an expendable piece of equipment to her.

"......With that being said, it's very easy. You shouldn't have anymore trouble as long as we properly work on your offense."

The Olden Style relied on preventing your opponent from being able to predict you while being able to thoroughly read your opponent's movements. This kind of prediction did not rely on visualizing those movements or physical capabilities, but rather experience and intuition. Of course, this sort of matter wasn't facilely attainable.

"Do you think you can master the Olden Style? Although Kurou is far from being capable of doing so, your father's research was incredible. As his son, it would be a disservice to him if you are only able to become some dabbling sword master."

"Guh....."

Kurou was completely unable to retort.

The technique known as the Olden Style that was left in his dad's notebook was pretty much systemized from the compilation of past warriors. It was merely theoretical, grasping this technique was not so simple in reality. At the very least, despite his father understanding the theory, he wasn't able to master it. Kurou would probably be incapable as well if attempting it alone.

Hyouka, who was very knowledgeable in the ways of the sword, got hold of the Olden Style technique book when she took in this teenage disciple. Precisely because it was under her guidance, although he was not well-versed in it, Kurou did pick up the Olden Style.

"However, you have worked fairly hard so I guess I'll offer you a bit of praise. Also, I might as well give you this while I'm at it."

After stating as such, Hyouka chucked something towards Kurou.

"Could this be.....the Sword Saint's successor marking ?"

The mark of the Sword Saint was carved into the white bracelet. This kind of thing could only be worn if the successor's qualifications were approved.

To have this be conferred to a human like Kurou——
——

"The one who chose you as a disciple was me. Whether or not to let you become the successor also rests on me. This is all my own will, this you should know, my dear Kurou."

"Master....."

Hyouka freely stuck her sword into the ground.

Following that, she unhesitantly approached Kurou and placed her hand on his shoulder.

"You did pretty good today since you properly dealt with my two hundred and sixty-five or so strikes. If I can state my desire, it would be for you to be able to block over three hundred strikes."

".....Well, then look forward to the me of tomorrow."

"Very well."

Hyouka lightly smiled and gently hugged Kurou.

When they had just met, Hyouka was much taller. However, Kurou was already taller than his master by three centimeters after seven years.

Along with being his master, she was also like a parent who raised him after his father passed away. While her sweet fragrance enveloped him————

Kurou was also already convinced that their days together were coming to an end.

During that brief period, Kurou recalled some irrelevant matters.

Even within that time frame, Kurou's body unwittingly began to move.

"Flames, go forth!"

Accompanying that chant-like phrase, a flame snake was launched.

That kind of thing was no longer an issue for Kurou anymore.

The flame snake was immensely powerful. If he had taken a direct hit then perhaps he would be dead.

Nevertheless, presently he was able to respond appropriately. He had wavered in the previous battle against this mystic art technique that he had no knowledge of————

However, dealing with it wasn't challenging for him anymore as long as he kept focused and prepared himself.

Gathering energy for the mystic art and releasing the flame snake consumed more time than taking action with a sword. Hence, in terms of evading————it wasn't quite an exacting task.

In one breath, Kurou dodged the flame and took off. In a sweeping motion, he swung the sword at the arts user's face.

"Guh.....!"

The arts user mustered all her effort in backing away and evaded his sword————however, the blade slightly grazed the hood. The hood, which had been obstructing her appearance, was now lifted up over her back.

The face behind the hood was now exposed.

Wearing those glasses, her face gave off a gentle impression. Her pigtails were also stuffed within the hood.

It was————

"Neena!?"

Sefi exclaimed in shock.

It was understandable for her to be that astonished. As one of the supporters who was constantly by Sefi's side, although she appeared to be well-behaved, she unexpectedly turned out to be the type to say whatever she wanted. She was somewhat of a peculiar girl. For the arts user to be her, Sefi could never have imagined such a scenario.

On the other hand, Kurou kept his cool. That was because he had already figured that the criminal was of course someone within the academy. In this aspect, Kurou was different from the uncontentious Sefi.

"N-Neena, why are you.....!"

"I'm very sorry, but no matter how I apologize it's going to come off a bit strange. Yes, the person who wants to kill you is me because that is my objective."

"H-Hold on a sec, what's with this all of a sudden! Your objective.....what do you mean by that!?"

Confronted with Sefi's interrogation, Neena tightly bit her lips and didn't respond.

While facing her, she only took off her glasses. Her eyes that were hidden behind the lens were————

"Huh, red eyes.....?"

Sefi opened her eyes in shock.

This time, even Kurou was a bit astounded. Swordies had numerous eye colors, however he had never seen glimmering, shining red eyes before.

"Neena, are you a....."

"So you know about it. Looks like it's still being circulated around within Sefi-sama's household. That's truly great. I was worried what I would do if you had said you had no clue."

Neena revealed a sinister smile.

"We are the descendants of the people you guys shoved into hell. If you had said you were uninformed of this matter.....then even cutting you up into eight chunks wouldn't do justice."

"Neena....."

"For the sake of my mission, I snuck into the academy. However, I definitely wasn't appalled by you. Sefi-sama, you truly treated me well. If you weren't the princess of the four generals....."

Neena removed her robe. Underneath was a tightly fitted black suit.

"The commotion had already expanded and so I thought my opportunity had arrived. However, I did not expect to be exposed. It's quite regrettable that I wasn't able to kill Sefi-sama."

Despite not being asked, Neena still revealed these matters.

Although Kurou was stunned, he still inquired from Neena.

"So your target was Sefi after all. You are also the one who killed Freya and Migune right?"

"Of course it was me, but that was only a matter of convenience."

Neena did not pause at all.

"Migune-san and Freya-san would head out towards the Outer Human Region every night and engage in tsujigiri. I encountered them by chance so that's how I know of it. Regarding the details behind this situation, a Sabers member like you should have a greater understanding of it am I right?"

"So the criminals in those incidents were Freya and Migune.....? Why would they carry out such a thing?"

"Isn't it just because they wanted real combat training? However, since their killings only involved gangster-like

punks, perhaps they even pretended to be heroes of justice."

"However, murdering people is never the right course of action."

Indeed, the victims of the tsujigiri incident were not ordinary people. They were people who were going to be arrested anyways if they weren't slayed during those tsujigiri incidents.

"Yeah, but I don't care about the victims to those tsujigiri incidents. I just can't forgive those who use their sword in such senseless matters."

"......So that's why you killed both of them?"

What Freya and Migune did was certainly not to be commended, rather it was illegal. However, what Neena did was basically the same so nothing changed in the end .

"No, wait a sec. Your goal is Sefi right? You just said it was due to 'convenience', but what about the assault incident that arose due to this? That would make it

burdensome for you to take action. With this excessive matter, it must have been difficult to reach your target. Isn't this just putting the cart before the horse?"

"That would be peachy as well wouldn't it?"

Neena wryly smiled as she elatedly spoke.

"For us, we don't hesitate to take action for any reason. If slaughtering Sefi-sama becomes harder to do, then it'd be much more exciting overcoming those hardships to reach our goal."

"You....."

Kurou was dumbstruck as he attentively gazed towards Neena's face.

"However, since I failed this time, I can't regard myself as being right. How regrettable, it's just like Kurou-san said, I can't win in this case."

A strange pulsing sound echoed near Neena's sword.

Kurou instantly ran towards Sefi and carried her body, protecting her in the process.

"Such sound judgment."

The flame snake wrapped around the sword————— and suddenly exploded with flames scattering in all directions.

Following that, Kurou's vision became clouded in red. His body was also being scorched by the flame's intense heat.

Kurou couldn't help but close his eyes, but in the instant he opened his eyes afterwards,

".....Tch, what's going on."

Kurou clicked his tongue.

The place where Neena was standing had already violently erupted into a fire. The narrow pathways had been completely blocked by the flames and Neena's figure was nowhere to be seen.

"We let her escape again. Curses.....aren't we about to be eliminated by Neena?"

Kurou surveyed his surroundings. Not only was he unable to find a fire extinguisher, the sprinkler system

was also unresponsive. The flames on the other hand were burning more intensely without any indication of dying out.

"We have no choice, let's go around that way. Sefi, follow me. As things stand, we no longer know who to trust anymore."

It was clear from Neena's words that she was undoubtedly part of a certain organization. Furthermore, the people that the organization dispatched to the academy might not just consist of her. That girl carelessly held affable feelings towards Sefi and could also be considered as a traitor amongst her group————but this was no laughing matter.

"Jeez, what's wrong with her. In the end, I still don't even know how she's able to use mystic arts."

"Ah, about that.....she might be....."

"Hmm?"

Sefi took a glance at the flames, lowering her gaze as she pondered.

After a brief pause, Sefi stated the following.

"Those red eyes.....I think Neena is probably.....a Blaze."

Neena seemed to be purposefully taking a meandering route when sprinting through the arena.

Of course, this was in order to shake off Kurou's pursuit so she was forced to take a more indirect route. Furthermore, since there was a gap between her physical capabilities and that of Kurou's who was a human, in all likelihood he won't be able to catch up.

Although she was reluctant, she did accept the truth. Setting aside the fact she couldn't overcome him with her sword, she was unable to prevail even with the addition of mystic arts.

She had failed her mission, thus it came to an end. Even with her true identity being compromised during the course of the mission, as long as the objective was achieved then it'd be fine. However, thinking along those lines was way too naive.

"If I can escape now, then this mission isn't a complete loss."

Neena muttered to herself.

The pathways to the arena were in complete disarray. There were plenty of other people scurrying around just like Neena.

Even if it was just a lone person murdered, the conduct of these Swordies who were running around in a frenzy was quite uncalled for. Whatever happened to these people who made a fool out of the humans seventy years ago?

Neena found the flight of stairs that was her destination. There were matters that she had to attend to up there.

At the top was the lowest section of the spectator stands that were organized in a stepwise fashion.

The students or any academy related individuals should have all been here to spectate the tournament. However, currently there were no other people present. It seemed that everyone sought refuge.

"Neena, are you hurt?"

".....Onee-sama!"

A dark figure silently appeared by Neena's side.

She was also wearing a robe like Neena did. Grasped in her hand was an incredulous longsword and scabbard.

"I've made you wait Onee-sama. I'm not hurt at all, but....."

"You weren't able to kill Sefi, however I can't blame you for failing. For now, let's head back first. Plus, I'm finished with my work over here."

With that said, the robed girl pointed to the nearby seats. Over there was a girl laying down. Seeing as her voluptuous breasts were still undulating, it seemed she was only knocked out.

"Although this task doesn't really matter to us, I guess it doesn't hurt to show a bit of sympathy for them."

"Yes Onee-sama. Well then, let me carry that girl. Just in case, it'd probably be better if Onee-sama and I split up————"

Neena stopped speaking at this point.

The robed girl standing in front of Neena ————no wait, something came charging over across from them from the top of the stepwise spectator stands,.

There was clearly killing intent within the sword————

“Onee-sama!”

Neena, who wanted to protect her, was already too late.

That certain individual who charged over swung their sword downwards. That one strike targeted the robed girl’s back————

“O-Onee-sama, Onee-sama.....!”

“Darn, I guess I missed.”

The boy’s calm and collected manner of speech distinctly contrasted with the panic-stricken Neena. Wait, Neena had met this boy before.

"I only managed to slice the robe? However, that's already more than adequate. From the gash in the robe, I caught a glance of a familiar uniform."

"Y-You are....."

That's right, Neena recalled, this guy's name was Lars.

He was the male Swordie that transferred over here with the human. He was also known as the son of one of the four generals.

Although he was a household member of the four generals, they weren't very attentive of him since he wasn't one of their targeted individuals.

"I took a peek at Kurou's battle with that kid. Since she suddenly escaped, I wondered where she was heading to . Following that I just tailed her from behind. Jeez, who would have thought you'd end up in this kind of place to meet someone as prestigious as her. Actually, I was quite flabbergasted myself."

"Just shrewdly handling the situation like you always do, Lars."

The robed girl turned around and removed the robe that had a slit running diagonally down its back.

The blue hair going down to her shoulders along with her black suit and skimpy miniskirt, even with this kind of getup it greatly suited her. It was an authentic Sabers uniform.

"Aren't you a bit simple-minded, or were you not vigilant of your surroundings? Which one is it, Director?"

"Which one is it....."

Manaka————the director of the Sabers, sinisterly smiled.

"Nevertheless, Lars is really quite frightening. Suddenly attacking from behind, it's to be expected from the guy known to possess a demonic swordsmanship."

"No no, this demon essence or whatever you call it is probably over exaggerated. It's merely an attack from behind by a Swordie who is a bit lacking in etiquette."

Demonic essence————this saying, Neena had also heard about it.

Although there were some male Swordies who rivaled female Swordies when it came to physical capabilities and swordsmanship techniques, it was said that the swords of those men were lodged with a demonic essence. Specifically, this referred to the prohibited use of backside attacks during a one-on-one fight among Swordies, slaughtering the defenseless, and even utilizing long range weapons. Furthermore, the most chilling aspect about it was————

"Being intoxicated with blood, making others suffer, committing murder, favoring these things above all else... ...is this person really like that Onee-sama?"

"The swords of the powerful Swordie males being infused with a demonic essence————I don't buy that kind of silly nonsense."

Manaka stated as she shrugged.

"However, I feel that this boy————Lars's sword is indeed embedded with a demonic essence."

"Goodness gracious, no matter who it is they all say approximately the same sort of thing."

Although Manaka's words were meant to provoke him , Lars responded in a calm manner.

Lars didn't affirm it or deny it. Even Manaka looked at him with a dreaded expression.

"Well, anything works for me at the moment. Compared to this, you should probably explain yourself a bit Director. What in the world is going on?"

"If you want to change the topic, then please be a bit more clever. However, there's actually no real significance behind gossiping over your demonic essence ."

Manaka gripped the hilt of her longsword tightly.

"It's just as you've witnessed and detected Lars. The criminal who carried out the attacks against the students is Neena over here and the person manipulating things behind the scenes would be me."

"How strange."

Lars interrupted immediately.

"You are Manaka, one of the Seven Swords. The scope of things is way too small for this incident to involve someone as significant as you. Even if she's the princess of the four generals, if it's just killing Sefi, then having you personally come out is a bit unusual isn't it?"

"That's because the numbers of my group is insufficient. Everyone has to share the responsibility even if it's just some diminutive task. Due to this cumbersome yet convenient Seven Swords standing, I'm able to do numerous things. Furthermore, even now I need to begin attending to some trivial matters."

Manaka wryly smiled as she stated. Following her iai strike, she pulled out her sword in one swift motion. Anyone who were to witness her possessing such an elongated scabbard for a blade as short as that would probably be taken aback by this.

However, whether it was Neena or Lars, neither felt surprised at all.

"Lars, you leisurely came to this place. However, from the moment you saw me, you left me no choice but to kill you!"

"……!"

Lars retrieved his sword and blocked Manaka's strike after she instantaneously closed in.

The blades of the two clashed. The rippling wave resulting from this shook the air as it dispersed in all directions.

After the wave dissipated, Manaka and Lars both backed off to their respective sides as they separated.

"Very excellent reaction time Lars."

"As to be expected of the Sword General. If I was able to dispose of you based on that last surprise attack, that'd be too easy."

Manaka's sword was shrouded in a white light————and her eyes were flickering with a red glint.

On the other hand, Lars's sword seemed to be emitting a blackish haze.

"Regardless if it's red or white, they both seem quite vivid Director."

"That applies to you as well. I believe it was called the Beast Slayer? It's been a long time but that sword is still as ominous as always."

Lars's personalized sword seemed to be called the Beast Slayer. It was particularly long and although it wasn't like Sefi's Starbreaker, it was also pretty thick and heavy. Compared to its sharpness, this type of sword seemed to be focused more on sturdiness.

"The hue of my light blade is a tad different from other Swordies, but it's not ominous at all. It has nothing to do with any demonic essence or whatever."

Lars calmly asserted.

Although Neena firmly believed that the color of the Beast Slayer's blade symbolized Lars's demonic essence, he didn't believe that was the case.

Forget about the demonic essence for now, Lars was not in the least inferior to females when it came to strength and agility. If that wasn't the case, that heavy sword would have had no chance to absorb Manaka's strike.

"However, red pupils? So Manaka is a Blaze after all."

Lars attentively gazed at Manaka's red eyes.

"You know the situation regarding the Blazes? That's perfect."

"Rather, it'd be more accurate to say that I just remembered. Although, I had considered this as a possibility after hearing about the mystic arts. The Blazes ————were forgotten about over time. So you lamentable traitors have gathered together?"

"You bastard!"

Neena became unwittingly agitated as she placed her hand on the hilt of her sword————

"Please stop at once Neena!"

"......Y-Yes."

Due to Manaka's words, Neena returned to her collected state. Indeed, to waver from being incited to this extent really showed the disgrace the Blaze soldiers held.

"What Lars said isn't wrong. Our existence had already been forgotten about. Even these red eyes are——"

"I'm not too familiar with the matter regarding the Blazes. However, to be able to change the color of those red pupils is really quite horrifying."

"Only the younger generation can change their eye color at will. The survivors of the Great War along with my parents, that generation will always have red eyes."

Manaka's eyes would normally be close to a halcyon green color and Neena's color on the other hand was brown. Although they could alter their colors at will, red was their original color.

"Even if we can do this sort of thing, it's nothing to brag about. Overall I feel like we are forced to conceal this otherwise we'd be mocked over this genetic factor."

Neena clenched her fists.

"Indeed, us Blazes had no choice but to conceal ourselves among the people————"

Neena slipped into the academy with forged personal records and falsely spoke about past dealings with her friends. Even matters regarding her family had to be stalled off through deceit.

Blazes————even among Swordies, Blazes were an exceptionally battle adept race.

They weren't just sticklers for swords, they were even proficient in mystic arts. It was said that at the time of the Great War, they were the ones who utilized these mystic arts that could destroy the enemy field guns and tanks.

Seeing those red-eyed Blazes who frequently fought on the frontlines of the Swordies, it must have been a scary scene for the human soldiers.

However, that battle brought about their demise. Moreover, around the time when the Swordie leaders consolidated power within Japan————the Blazes were eliminated.

The Blazes were overly powerful. Faced with the end of the war, the Blazes were a threat to the Swordies who wanted to establish a new peaceful society. And once they heard the proclamation of the four generals————

The Blazes thirsted for battle. They were the traitors who wanted to disrupt the peace among the Swordies.

Although it was a fabricated accusation with no basis supporting it, the cries of the Blazes were easily brushed aside due to the stark inferiority in numbers.

Back when the Swordies all resided within Swordia, the Blazes were a mercenary group that didn't belong to any particular nation. However, the world didn't advocate for repeated warring. Although their combat strength was incredible which lead to various nations employing them, the thirst for battle within this mercenary group instilled fear.

Precisely because of this, the four generals' calling for the removal of the Blazes went without a hitch.

Faced with a pre-emptive strike, practically all of the Blaze leaders were obliterated. Furthermore, the remaining combatants were unable to even stage a resistance with their fragmented numbers. Each time they were routed. It couldn't even be called a war, it was pretty much just a slaughter.

The number of Blazes became strikingly few. In the end, they gave up resisting.

Despite avoiding the death sentence, the remaining Blazes were kept apart from society since they were latent criminals with their bellicose nature.

With the limitations on the districts they lived in, the relationship between Swordies and Blazes were practically severed. For the sake of molding their attitude to be more obedient, they put together a correctional course in the school primarily used by Blazes. Plus, the Swordies especially wanted to restrict them from using swords.

They weren't even allowed to enroll in the military or become part of the police force. They were going to prevent giving the Blazes a chance to battle at all costs.

It didn't matter if it was glory, swords, or battle, the Blazes were deprived from all of it. They were only left with their frustrated lives as a result of the world after the war.

Following that, even their existence itself was forgotten————

"......Well, it's not like I'm unsympathetic towards the mighty Blazes but they couldn't possibly be thinking about revenge just recently right?"

Lars refrained from speaking in an arrogant manner, he simply felt this was inconceivable.

"It was probably the four generals who declared the elimination of the Blazes after the war. Basically that'd be mine and Sefi's grandfathers. Hasn't it already been sixty years since then? Of course, setting aside the Blazes of that time period for now, but for Manaka, isn't this an extremely ancient topic?"

"The survivors at that time are no longer with us anymore. After hearing about the whining and hatred towards the four generals and about the obliteration of our race from the grannies who know this matter intimately, we were pretty much brainwashed. The diminishing of our hatred doesn't necessarily occur with the passage of time. Having this matter passed down is very possible."

In response to Manaka's statement, Neena slowly nodded. Neena's grandmother was one of the people who ferociously attacked at the frontlines during the

Great War. After the war concluded, not only were her contributions unrecognized, she was also freely discarded as if she was trash. When it came to talking about the cleansing of their race, her normally amiable grandmother became all demon-like, sending the young Neena trembling in fear.

"Furthermore, even though the cleansing had already ended, the difference in our treatment still persists. Like Neena over here, if we didn't give a fake school record, there would be no way she'd be permitted in the Sword Academy. If word got out that a Blaze was holding a sword, she'd be imprisoned for many years."

"Ah, I see I see."

Lars enthusiastically nodded and gently waved the Beast Slayer a bit.

"Our goal is in accordance with getting revenge for the past and wiping out of the current state of affairs. With this, we had specially forged these school records to let Blaze members sneak in from all over the place. However , for the students it's not a big deal, but to actually not engage in a background check for one of the Seven Swords is really quite laughable."

"The Swordie government has already been around for too long. No matter what kind of government it is, there will always be the day that it becomes corrupted."

"I'll advise my parents."

"That won't be possible since you'll die right here....."

An inauspicious smile surfaced on Manaka's face————following that, she slowly approached Lars.

The air rumbled. The overwhelming light force from Manaka's entire body was increasing steadily.

This type of force would probably even drive a Swordie unconscious let alone a human.

Confronted with her true power, Neena, who looked up to her as an older sister————was left trembling.

Manaka sighed within herself. Indeed, she could not treat him as just a child anymore.

Up until now, Manaka had been doing her utmost to suppress her light force while she was with the Sabers. However, she was presently unleashing her light entirely .

A Swordie's light surfaces the moment they are born. Thenceforth, they are able to harness it with training and amplify it through a refining process. Manaka possessed this innate powerful light force and after much bitter training, she was able to control the light regarded as the "strongest among the seven".

Without needing to mention humans, even Swordies would probably have a strenuous time holding a sword upright in the face of Manaka's fully emitted light.

Nevertheless, Lars maintained his cool when confronted with Manaka's light force.

However, up to this it was still what he had come to expect from Manaka. Following that————

Manaka took action without any warning.

With her blinding speed, she swung the sword downwards from over her head. Lars calmly wielded the

Beast Slayer and intercepted her attack from the front. A rippling wave that jolted the air once again dispersed across. He was not in the least astonished when confronted with the speed Manaka displayed. Rather, he collectedly used his swordsmanship to deflect away the attack. No wonder he was a curious being.

Manaka did not cease as she continuously attacked.

"Ugh!"

However, Lars's defending was done with great difficulty. Manaka's sword traveled as if it was at the speed of light. A stiff staccato could be heard every time their swords met. The white radiance also cut through the black haze of the Beast Slayer.

Known as the Dancer————it was Manaka's personalized sword. The length was pretty average, but the blade was very thin. It was akin to the thinness of a sheet of paper. With just the augmentation of the light blade, you would think it sounded like glass breaking when their swords collided.

"Guh.....!"

After Lars had forcefully repelled Manaka's sword, he decided to go for some separation.

"Fufu, you won't be able to win if you're just defending Lars."

Due to the acute angles at which her sword maneuvers struck, Manaka's Dancer would never break regardless of how their blades crossed. In some ways, it resembled the Olden Style utilized by Kurou.

"As expected of Onee-sama! You're so strong!"

"Hey, you over there, your attitude seems to have changed."

Lars still kept his eyes on Manaka as he calmly snarked.

Neena was a child who fervently worshipped Manaka's sword. Clearly they weren't siblings, yet she still referred to her as "Onee-sama". Manaka on the other hand did not reveal any signs of abhorrence and was instead very fond of her.

"However, you're still as fast as always Director. I'm completely unable to catch up."

"Putting on an act or messing around wouldn't result in such fluid wielding of the sword."

Manaka's sword was much lighter compared to Lars's or Sefi's swords. Being lighter only resulted in increased agility. Although there was a trade off in power, as long as she struck the opponent's weak points then she would be able to remedy the issue. Of course, that kind of technique was already refined by Manaka ages ago.

"Flames, go forth!"

It was as if the dragon-shaped flame sprayed out of the blade of the Dancer. Immediately after, the dragon charged at Lars with remarkable speed.

Without even a second to be astonished, Lars pedaled off the ground with a ton of force to hop away. The dragon was overly quick and enormous. Had he reacted any slower then he wouldn't have been able to avoid it. Passing by Lars's body was the giant dragon that vigorously dashed towards the spectator stands. Following that, it exploded in a ball of flames.

"Guh, ah, hot.....!"

The embers from the flame landed on Lars's uniform so he hurriedly took it off. Not too long after, that suit completely caught on fire, incinerating it into a pile of ashes.

"Ah, that's quite dangerous! What the heck, that child's was clearly a snake but this time it's a dragon. I definitely haven't done anything to deserve a burning execution....."

"You sure have guts. The power of the mystic arts is entirely reliant on one's light capacity. It's just as you've known, my light is quite strong which means the power of the dragon isn't the same."

"It's precisely as she stated. Onee-sama's dragon is able to roast any guy. Quit struggling already and just let her partially roast you————e-eh?"

Neena, who let the success get to her, paused halfway through her statement. Manaka on the other hand instantly understood why. It was because the left cuff of Lars's shirt was incinerated by the flames, revealing something that had been hidden.

"The Sword Saint's.....successor mark.....?"

"Ah, so you've noticed. Fortunately I'm quite cautious and tried my best to keep this from being spotted."

After Lars half jokingly finished speaking, he knocked against the bracelet on his left arm.

"That reminds me, I forget to tell you Neena. Lars is also my sister's————the Sword Saint's disciple."

"Eh? Isn't the Sword Saint's only disciple that reprehensible human?"

"You seem to have even mixed Kurou-kun into this. At the time it was an issue that caused quite a stir. A kid with a demonic essence that no one would ever want to accept as their disciple was taken in by the Sword Saint....."

Once Manaka heard this, even she was stupefied.

Although it was fine to accept a disciple, but to specially select a problematic child————

"I'm perplexed by my sister as well. That's because whenever she spots someone weird, she always wants to

place them by her side. However, after she accepted this kid with a demonic essence, she immediately went on to accept a human child as a disciple. It nonstop became someone else's problem. Lars, it's really quite pitiful."

"However, I was absolutely jubilant over this. Having another disciple who was the same age as me, it truly was delightful. If it was just me and that unrestrained master of mine residing in the mountains.....don't even get me started."

Indeed, Lars never wanted to drift apart from Kurou.

More accurately, he practiced together with Kurou who had honed his bizarre swordsmanship based on the Olden Style. That allowed Lars, who was exceptionally strong for a guy, to take his training to the next step. Manaka was very knowledgeable of this.

Precisely because of this, he was still able to put up a fight against one of the Seven Swords even though it wasn't quite enough.

"Darn, I shouldn't be conversing like this all day. It's time to put an end to this. I also have to take that girl back with me."

Manaka took a peek at the girl who was laid down on the spectator stands————Hinako.

"Oh, so that means the Blazes are in cahoots with the Sun Cult?"

"Didn't I just mention this? We were originally a rare race. The Sun Cult on the other hand consists only of humans. To us, there is some exploitative value in them."

"Rounding up people.....could it be, you guys are plotting a military coup?"

"I've already said that the time for chatting has ended. Well, if it's just this then I suppose I can answer. It's just as you stated. The Swordie government that has lasted till now will give rise to the people who have lain dormant in the darkness throughout history————us Blazes."

Manaka's words were spoken without an ounce of doubt. She wasn't kidding around nor was she bluffing.

"Director, are you serious? Take a step back for a moment, you do know your enemy is the government of the entire country right? Besides the Blazes being somewhat powerful, there isn't really any other

distinguishing characteristics. You guys probably have no chance to succeed."

"Isn't that fine as well?"

Manaka elatedly laughed like a child.

"I don't consider myself to be very normal, I also believe the Blaze's battle capabilities cannot be dealt with . Truthfully speaking, wiping out the Blazes after the Great War was understandable."

"However, eliminating and denying the Blaze's existence are two separate matters."

"Alright Lars, offer up your blood, accept our letter of challenge!"

Manaka raised the Dancer, seemingly sliding it to her side. Despite being on the spectator stands which were hard to freely move around, she did not appear to be hindered in her movements in any way.

"No way————!"

Just then, Lars's face showed signs of nervousness for the first time.

Manaka's seemingly weightless movements————— suddenly changed.

"Seven figures————!"

In front of Lars, who opened his eyes wide in shock, appeared seven Manakas.

Manaka forcefully pedaled off the ground. As she ripped through the air, she continued to sprint on over.

Due to her high speed shifts in movement, afterimages were created. This absurdity was accomplished by the one acclaimed as one of the monstrous Seven Swords——————Manaka.

Lars held his sword as such and traced Manaka's movements with his eyes. Although it was quite impressive that he was able to capture the movements of the seven figures, he was already approaching his limits.

The seven Manakas appeared to be colliding together as they all engaged in a melee against Lars.

"Goodbye Lars."

"......!"

Who knows how many strikes Manaka's sword unleashed. Lars on the other hand let out an inaudible gasp.

The seven figures traveled past Lars in a violent gale————following that, those clones dissipated akin to a vanishing cloud and Manaka, who had been fiercely wielding the sword in her right hand, quietly stopped in her tracks.

Lars was slashed all the way from his right shoulder to below his chest and all the way to his left leg. His blood came pouring out.

"Chaos Dancer————"

Manaka solemnly declared as she put away her sword.

Through her overwhelming light force, she attained extreme speeds. With that, her fluid movements allowed her to replicate seven figures of herself.

The seven figures unleashed countless attacks in unison————which was known as the Chaos Dancer.

Lars had seen something like that during his training, but this was the first time he had to take the brunt of the attack head on.

Despite his reflexively fast parrying of the majority of the attacks with the Beast Slayer, he wasn't able to defend from all of them.

Lars kneeled down from where he was and pressed against his chest that was covered in blood. Although this injury wouldn't become a cause for death presently, there was no guarantee he would live if left unattended.

"As expected of my sister's disciple. Having been engulfed by the Chaos Dancer, you only suffered an injury to this extent. Looks like even without my sister here, you have not let the training go to waste."

"Chatting once again already Director? It's just as you see, I'm still alive."

"You needn't overexert yourself Lars. I don't like watching people suffer so now I shall free you."

"It seems I'm the only one who is about to die. That's not too bad right?"

Lars stared into Manaka's eyes as he spoke.

The one who was stunned at this line was Neena. Regardless if it was Manaka or Lars, their fixated gazes did not even shift one millimeter.

"No can do, you want the successor mark to be placed solely on me?"

Kurou leisurely walked over in their direction and stopped as he reached where Lars was.

"A guy who has the same successor mark as me better not be accepting death. You're not weak like I am. Liven up a bit."

"I had hoped you'd comfort me a little....."

Lars faintly muttered as he smiled.

Normally they did not seem to have a very tight-knit bond, but there weren't any strains between the two either.

The two guys who received her sister's mentoring.....

Kurou and Lars are truly quite admirable————— Manaka thought to herself.

There were multiple figures on the spectator stands of the arena.

Kurou kept a vigilant watch of his surroundings.

Lars's body was stained with blood as he kneeled on the ground.

Neena on the other hand, having not wiped off the blood dripping from the wound Kurou had dealt to her not too long ago, kept a wakeful watch on Kurou.

The one who fainted————or rather, the one leisurely sleeping away was Hinako.

Moreover————

"You've finally showed up Kurou-kun. I'm actually very thankful that you found our location here."

"I spent the majority of my time aimlessly running around. However————fortunately it was easy to recognize the light of someone I was well acquainted with."

Since he was unable to sense the force Manaka emitted , then it was obvious that she had already arrived at the spectator stands.

"Yeah.....it's annoying how there's something in my body that I can't completely control."

"Everyone probably has something similar to that. Whenever I see Sefi, even I get these feelings that are uncontrollable."

"Hold on! Be a little more tactful about it! At least make it sound more attractive!"

Immediately after Kurou spoke, Sefi hurriedly began to snark at him. However, the issue was probably just in the wording of it.

"Ah haha. No matter when, Kurou-kun always stays true to himself."

"If I can't maintain my usual self at a time like this, then it'd be impossible for me to stand here before you."

Manaka's eyes were glowing red just like Neena's.

Up until he arrived here, he had already heard about the Blazes from Sefi. By combining all the facts, he was able to deduce Manaka's motive.

Could this person be.....

Kurou's train of thought was right on the money.

Although he had come here seeking Manaka's protection, the situation had developed in an exceedingly unfathomable way.

Despite this, Kurou wouldn't waver from this even though what he saw in front of him was beyond his imagination. This was the self-confidence he had acquired from his grueling training.

Kurou's piercing glare was fixed on Manaka————

At this moment, Manaka sprung up like an arrow.

"Kurou-kun!"

"Manaka!"

Manaka's Dancer turned into countless strikes of light.

In face of that overwhelming light, Kurou practically unwittingly drew his sword.

A metallic ear piercing clash sounded. Immediately after, the friction even produced sparks.

Manaka's sword was akin to a machine gun as it repeatedly attacked nonstop. However, they were all parried away by Kurou's Olden Style.

As expected, she was in a class of her own compared to Neena————Kurou deflected away Manaka's attack as he was under pressure once again due to the powers of the Seven Swords.

He didn't feel stressed in the least bit from that sudden exchange.

Manaka was a Blaze and there was the fear that she was the one manipulating the entire situation from behind the scenes. He trusted her and even handed over

Hinako who was now taken away————was she planning on using her? Or did she plan on returning her to the Sun Cult? Furthermore, just when did she realize that Kurou and Lars had to be eliminated as well?

Without a doubt, the Sword General was Kurou's enemy.

Regardless of her being his master's sister or his boss, Kurou would instantly be slayed if he were to deliberate over this kind of predicament. You will never find anyone who contemplates over these excessive thoughts when their life hanged in the balance against the opponent.

The wirewalking-esque attacking and defending persisted———actually, only Kurou was defending in this one-sided attack by Manaka.

With a battle like this, the combat would end as soon as Kurou exhausted all his strength.

However, carelessly pulling away was also a huge danger. Manaka was most likely an arts user as well. Having experienced the numerous flame attacks dished out by Neena, he already understood the battle style of an arts user.

Neena's mystic arts required a slight charge up time to activate. This charging time resulted in a huge opening and as a result, if there was no separation then it would be cumbersome to unleash a mystic art. As long as he closed the distance by attacking in this fashion, there would be no time for the opponent to store power, rendering them hard pressed to activate a mystic art.

If Manaka was able to activate her mystic arts at this close of a distance without building up power, then Kurou's chances of winning would be practically zero. Thus, he did not contemplate over this matter.

"Guh!"

Accompanying that sound, Kurou immediately felt a burning sensation on his shoulders.

It was because he was unable to fully avoid Manaka's blade which lead to his left shoulder being slashed. Had he not partially evaded her blade, he might have lost his entire left arm. Even until now, he had dreaded being engulfed by a Swordie's blade.

"You're still far from good enough Kurou-kun!"

"Guah.....!"

The pain from his shoulder did not even have enough time to soak in.

There was an immediate change during the clash of swords between Kurou and Manaka.

Although Manaka's blade was a tad small, it had actually pierced through Kurou's body.

As he mustered all his effort in dodging her sword, there was absolutely no window for him to even counterattack.

Seemingly as if it was reducing his life, he pushed his limits as he fought. At every instance, he would experience a body shattering sensation.

Kurou's maximum currently culminated in astonishing speeds. He instantly closed in————

"Oh jeez, you are really getting on my nerves! So annoying!"

Manaka stated as such. She raised the Dancer and jumped back a few meters.

Kurou did not negligently perform a parlous maneuver such as closing the distance. Although he really feared mystic arts, he wasn't one of those amateurs who would recklessly approach his opponent.

"Haa haa....."

Kurou adjusted his breathing as he confirmed the wound on his shoulder. It was a pretty firm strike and there were numerous lacerations all over his body.

Although they were minor wounds, those injuries actually dampened his physical capabilities, resulting in his sword becoming sluggish.

With a swordsman of Manaka's level as an opponent, even the slightest wavering would certainly result in death.

"Kurou, the Director will unleash a massive flame dragon attack. If you're not careful, you'll be charred in an instant."

"I appreciate the advice. However Lars, you should lay down."

Although he mentioned as such, Kurou clearly understood that he could not permit him to do that. Despite going against a sword wielded by one of the Seven Swords, there was no clue as to when he might get caught up in the battle. At the very least, Manaka was probably unconcerned about Lars's life.

"Kurou-kun, how about I give you a piece of advice? Currently, it seems Sefi can't resist the urge to attack you. "

"Uh."

Kurou unawarely turned around. So that was it, Sefi's face was blushing entirely as she wielded the Starbreaker in embarrassment.

"O-Of course not. Even I would wait for an opportune time arises to attack you!"

"So you'll come attacking when the time is right!?"

Was she getting excited over Kurou's sword again? He could not bear to take more attacks under these circumstances. Certainly a human would be unable to withstand this courtship of death.

"Being a Swordie is demanding. But in the end, we Blazes are Swordies as well. Thus, it's easy to relate to this————it's difficult to control the impulse to love swords."

"What, you're also captivated by me?"

"What do you mean by 'also'....."

"It'd be fine if we set this trifling issue aside right?"

Manaka elatedly spoke to Sefi who was completely sullen.

"Although it's regrettable, my heart is also set on someone. That person was very, very strong. My heart had always been captivated by her sword. Kurou-kun, do you know who I'm talking about?"

"....."

Kurou offered no response. Rather, he waited for Manaka to continue.

"Sword Saint Hyouka————Kurou-kun, it is my sister which you have killed."

"Eh.....? Killed.....?"

The one who blankly stared on as they muttered wasn't Kurou, but rather Sefi.

"From the lack of a reaction, Lars knows about it too I see. Actually, perhaps you two were accomplices?"

".....Did I just hear the Director reasoning to herself aloud once again?"

After glancing at Lars, Manaka tapped her finger against her forehead.

"That wound on Kurou-kun's forehead.....I had detected it ever since you came down from the mountains. That wound was dealt by my sister wasn't it?"

"Even if that is the case, what's so strange about it? Since I've constantly used real swords to train with my master, receiving one or two wounds in the process isn't that out of the ordinary."

Kurou attentively gazed at Manaka's red eyes as he candidly stated.

"That wound isn't just an ordinary wound. My eyes have not yet deteriorated. Every Swordie utilizes a personalized sword. Kurou-kun's wound was most likely dealt to him by my sister's personalized sword, the Eternal Horizon. Do you understand what I'm getting at? Don't even deny it."

Kurou was also informed of his master's personalized sword, the Eternal Horizon.

Upon first glance, there was nothing particular to say about it. It was merely a single-edged katana. As for its specs, even the Starbreaker and Dancer possessed more offensive power. However, the Sword Saint's personalized sword seemed to be one of the few renowned swords that were forged in her birthplace. Also, they had previously heard that no other swords were able to endure a full power slash by the Sword Saint.

Furthermore, when the Sword Saint utilized her personalized sword, it was going to be a life or death deciding fight. Only when she would be willing to risk her life in battle would she ever wield her personalized sword. This matter was only known by those close to the Sword Saint.

"I had always attentively watched my sister. I only had my eyes set on her. As a result, I have come to understand the kind of wound that sword can generate and the type of wound that would result from her going for the kill. Kurou-kun, you unleashed your true powers when fighting against Sword Saint Hyouka. However, to this day, you're the one standing here and my sister on the other hand is missing without a trace. That means——"

"Ah, so it must mean I slayed Sword Saint Hyouka."

At the moment, Kurou felt as if his own heart was coldly sinking.

There was probably no point in feigning ignorance. Manaka's reasoning was pretty much one hundred percent accurate. The everlasting wound on Kurou's forehead was dealt by none other than Sword Saint Hyouka.

"Indeed, me and my master wagered our lives in a match. However, how did it end up like that? Why was that the case? Why would I battle against that person.....?"

"Quit joking around!"

Finally, Manaka got all riled up.

In the eight years he had been with her, he had never heard her voice this stern.

“You’re saying you don’t remember!? Your own master————my sister was killed, yet you still joke around!? You.....You!”

Kurou was not fiddling around in the slightest.

He barely recalled what happened during the battle against the Sword Saint. He had experienced overwhelming fear. In the past, he saw her in his hometown holding the Eternal Horizon in her hand. In a fluid fashion, she battled as if she was going to exterminate everyone in the world. That kind of omnipotent monster was right in front of him.

That dreaded creature, was it of this world?

Actually, it must have been due to his extreme levels of fear when confronted with her.

Within Kurou’s memories, it did not contain the entire battle against the Sword Saint. When he returned to his

senses, his forehead had received a deep gash, his body could not even move as he was sapped of all his strength. He had collapsed by the side of the little hut in the mountains.

Additionally, the fallen personalized sword by Kurou's side was covered with someone's blood.....

"Guh....."

Suddenly, the wound on his forehead began to pulsate . A wound from a year ago had already healed right away, so how come up till now.....

"Alright, enough. It doesn't matter if you truly don't remember or you're just playing dumb. There's nothing I have left to say towards Kurou-kun. In place of not having been able to slash my sister, how about I slash you instead? This should serve as a replacement."

Wooosh, an eerie sound emanated from the blade of Manaka's Dancer.

"Flames, go forth....."

As the flame rose while wrapped around the blade, it began to take shape. It was just as Lars had described, it kindled into a dragon shaped flame.

Although he understood that he shouldn't be spellbound by this————that genuine red dragon appearance was remarkably beautiful. Following that, the flame dragon continuously expanded.

His forehead kept pulsating with pain. Clearly he had no choice but to flee, but his body wouldn't budge. Was it the result of the pain from his wound, or was it because he was captivated?

"Rou!" "Kurou!", the shouts of his name came from nearby. Kurou believed that it would be great if Sefi and Lars were able to escape. There was no need to worry about him.

"I won't allow someone who bears a wound from my sister to live. You'll be incinerated along with that wound ."

That colossal ball of flame that had transformed into a dragon was casted off from Manaka's sword.

Why did it seem as if time was slowing down? The world became dyed in red and accompanying that deadly scorching heat, Kurou distinctly saw the gaping mouth of that gigantic dragon.

Looks like this had nothing to do with his body being petrified. Even in Kurou's ideal state, he would probably feel powerless in face of this flame.

In the end, it probably cost him dearly that he had never predicted a situation where someone as powerful as Manaka would be the one manipulating things from behind the scenes.

".....?"

Just as everyone had thought Kurou was going to be burned to ashes, suddenly the back of someone's figure stood in front of him.

"Hinako!?"

As Kurou yelled out for her, the flame dragon engulfed the maid outfit wearing girl. In an instant, her slender figure should be roasted by the flames, not even a trace of a single bone should remain————

"What.....!?"

The one expressing their shock wasn't Kurou, but rather it was Manaka.

The momentum of the flame dragon that was supposed to have burned her to death was rapidly weakening.

It was as if the flame dragon was sucked into Hinako's chest————the whole thing vanished.

"What's going on, how could this be happening.....?"

Kurou muttered. As the flames disappeared, the surroundings were still eye piercingly bright.

There was clearly no wind, yet Hinako's black hair floatingly swayed. A golden radiance was emitted from her body.

This light was identical to the one discharged by Hinako when he first encountered her that one night.

The maiden of the sun————

Kurou unwittingly recalled that line. Was it the power to eliminate all traces of flame based mystic arts? In that case, the attack Neena unleashed from before was also stopped by her.

"Flames, go forth!"

Hearing Manaka's shout, Kurou instantly lifted his head. Just like before, a flame raised from Manaka's sword————however, the flame then dispersed in all directions as it vanished.

"I can't activate it————!? What the!?"

Manaka could plainly be seen wavering while Kurou couldn't hide his own shock either. Previously described as dispelling mystic arts, would it be more accurate to say that her power was to seal the Blazes from using mystic arts.....?

"Do not interfere with Onee-sama!"

Damn, I had forgotten about her!

Kurou had no time to react to Hinako being suddenly attacked. With things happening one after another, Kurou couldn't even keep pace.

"You're the one who shouldn't interfere!"

"Sefi-sama!?"

Sefi reacted much quicker than Kurou. Standing by Hinako's side, she used the Starbreaker to block Neena's sword.

Neena's strength surpassed Sefi's. However, it was not to the point where Sefi crumbled under the might of Neena's sword.

"Hinako, that's enough. Come back here with me————"

After parrying away Neena's sword, Sefi dragged Hinako by her hand.

At that moment————a golden light of greater intensity poured out when the their hands touched.

"What is it this time!?"

It was the first time Kurou encountered this. These preposterous matters were occurring one after another.

Suddenly, everyone present————even Kurou and Manaka who had repeatedly fought countless battles actually gazed away from their opponent and looked up into the sky.

In the sky overlooking the arena, a sound akin to thunder echoed and there appeared to be a split in the blue skies.

The split was actually fairly large, making it unfeasible to actually estimate its dimensions. However, it was quite obvious that only part of the sky turned pitch-black as if it was night. Accompanying that air-tremoring sound, the split gradually increased————

An explosive noise rang. Following that, the split disappeared just as suddenly as how it emerged.

".....I have no idea what's even going on."

Kurou was dumbfounded as he spoke. The golden radiance had already dissipated.

Sefi and Hinako lowered their heads and sat down from where they were. Gazing up into the sky wondering what had happened was Neena who was a few meters away from them.

“Could that have been.....a portal.....?”

“A portal.....”

Kurou was stunned after hearing Manaka’s murmuring.

The portal was used by the Swordies to enter this world. Who knew how many there were at the time, but after the Great War they should all have been closed.

That kind of thing, why would it happen now————

“I.....I see. Now I see why the Sun Cult highly coveted Hinako. Perhaps the group’s orders to obliterate Sefi were also————”

“Perhaps so.....however, I’ll have to contemplate over this later. Right now we still need to determine a victor.”

Kurou stated in a declaration towards Manaka.

The throbbing pain from his old wound had already disappeared at some point.

His head was all cleared up now and he knew exactly what he had to do.

If it was impossible for him to land a hit on Manaka, then nothing could be done.

Sefi and Hinako, what happened between them? In order to find out, he had to protect his own life here.

“Yes, if Kurou-kun were to lose here then I’ll end up killing Sefi. Hinako will probably once again be imprisoned by the Sun Cult.”

“How regrettable, I won’t let that happen. Although bathing with you was nice, it’s unfortunate that it wasn’t with a younger girl.”

“Fufu, Kurou-kun still doesn’t understand the charms of an adult?”

Manaka revealed a seductive smile. She put on an act as she flipped the hair resting on her shoulders behind her back.

"Hey, Kurou-kun. Do you believe you can win? Even though I can't utilize any mystic arts, I still have my sword. Actually, this sword is my entirety."

"If that's the case, then it'll be fine as long as I put everything on the line."

Kurou continued to pace along the stepwise spectator stands.

Manaka on the other hand did the same as Kurou, walking one step at a time as they maintained their distance.

In a decisive battle between swords, there was no chance of him winning. Kurou was well aware of that already.

Despite that, he couldn't just withdraw his sword and call it quits.

For his own future————in order to attain his Dagger and establish his foothold within society, Kurou kept wielding his sword.

However, right now there was more than just that.

During the time that had passed since he arrived at the academy, the number of reasons for him to battle had risen.

Reflecting over it, he had always acted like a spoiled child around Sefi. Regardless if it was teasing her or sexually harassing her, being able to act coquettishly around her and her being able to bear it made it very exciting.

Hinako————she was barred from the outside world her entire life. Although she was very pleased with the school lifestyle, she still needed to go beyond the school and see the vast world.

I won't let you kill Sefi, or allow you to lock Hinako up again.

As long as they were present, Kurou would still find a way to stand. He was able to battle because he wanted to protect them.

Despite that the swordsman in front of him was not on par with that monster he had encountered during his childhood, overcoming this obstacle was still exacting. There was an obvious gap in strength between the two of them.

However, he had changed from his childhood days when he survived Sword Saint Hyouka's sword.

For Sefi and Hinako, and in order to display his swordsmanship, he now crossed swords with Manaka.

"Perhaps the number of reasons for prolonging this life has increased. I'm able to fight you because of that."

"I only have one reason to kill Kurou-kun. Just one is enough. I have wanted to kill you all along, any time would have been fine and that time is now."

Manaka's footsteps ceased and then she took off in a gliding motion. Accompanying her breakneck speed, a sonic boom sounded. The seven Manakas that appeared seemingly went to surround Kurou as they lined up together.

That wasn't all though.

Manaka tightly gripped the scabbard by her waist. In one swift motion, she pulled out another sword.

Her personalized sword, the Dancer, was in each of the two sides of the scabbard.

She was the dreaded dual wielder of two slender swords. This was Sword General Manaka's true combat style.

"Let's go Dancer. In front of these spectators who eagerly await, let's transcend the world in our dance!"

The seven Manaka's crossed their swords in front of their chest and gently kissed the blade that emitted an icy lustre.

This action, which exuded womanly charms, sent the heartstrings shaking.

"As expected, Manaka sure is terrifying."

There it was, Kurou's heart began pounding nonstop.

The dual wielded Chaos Dancer————that blade had the profound meaning of making countless people drop dead like a meteor shower and it was expertly put into use by the seven Manakas. It was Kurou's first time witnessing this.

"Goodbye Kurou-kun, goodbye."

Manaka's muttering, just how many managed to catch that?

These seven princesses initiated the movements for the sword dance of death————

"Haaaaa!"

"What!?"

Suddenly, an animal-like roar was heard. Manaka's dance-like movements came to a screeching halt after her shoes intensely braked along the surface.

"Lars! What are you?!"

"You had mentioned my demonic essence before, but it's really quite a shame that you had forgotten all about me."

Lars had silently approached Manaka from behind and saw through the main body of the seven Manakas. With one swing of the sword, he cleanly sliced Manaka's lower leg.

After that, Lars nimbly separated from Manaka and stood there as he held onto the Beast Slayer. Blood violently bursted out from the wound Manaka had dealt to him. Perhaps even standing was strenuous for him.

There was no doubt that he poured all his strength into that one strike.

“I’m sorry but————I won’t let you kill Kurou. That’d be the equivalent of killing me.”

“Lars.....!”

Manaka’s indignant eyes focused on Lars who was brazenly smiling despite looking pale from the loss of blood.

“That’s all I can do. You’re up Kurou. You still haven’t displayed your true strength. Now is the time to pull out your sword!”

After Lars finished speaking, the Beast Slayer and Lars both toppled to the ground. Although he was not dead, he was nearing his breaking point.

"Pull out his sword? What's he saying? Didn't Kurou retrieve his sword a long time ago?"

"....."

Manaka was completely baffled, however Kurou clearly understood what Lars meant.

Kurou diligently fought against the Sword Saint. Furthermore, he at least came out alive.

At that time————if he could just summon the strength that allowed him to survive back then.....

Despite losing all recollections, he recognized what he needed to do. He didn't just learn the Olden Style from the Sword Saint. Originally, the Sword Saint's technique wasn't even the Olden Style, her true values were embodied by something else.

"At best, all you did was deal a cut to my leg!"

Manaka once again made her move. Her dance was at divine speeds and caused a gale. At this moment, Kurou noticed something slightly off.

This time there wasn't seven duplicates, but five instead. Looks like the wound she had suffered from Lars was quite grave.

However, the disparity in strength between Kurou and hers was still too great even though she had been dealt a wound like this. Even just five of them utilizing the Chaos Dancer would probably desecrate Kurou without difficulty.

However, he couldn't lose here.

It was Manaka herself that had stated this before. As the disciple of the Sword Saint, he absolutely could not incur a shameful loss.

The wound Manaka delivered to him was pulsating in pain as blood flowed out.

Even so, that was nothing compared to the pain from being slashed by the Sword Saint.

For I to have lived after battling the Sword Saint————how could I die here!

Now was the time to use it, the other significant ability he had learned from his master————

"Die Kurou!"

The dual wielded Chaos Dancer came flying at him.

Kurou ran towards the five Manakas.

As he sprinted over, a white ray of light was radiating from Kurou's entire body————

"The light blade!? B-But how!?"

No, this wasn't the light blade.

Swordies were able to transmit a portion of the light in their body to their blade. However, it differed for Kurou.

Because he was unable to completely control his light, it was impossible for him to concentrate it into his blade. As a result, the light kept pouring out from his entire body.

There was the disadvantage of being unable to gather it in his blade, but the light that traveled throughout his entire body raised his physical capabilities and defensive power.

Although it wasn't on par with a Swordie, it did go beyond the limits of a human.

To Kurou, who had always maintained his normal state when fighting against Swordies, this was already more than enough. An unpredictable swordsmanship plus the physical capabilities that surpassed that of a human.

If the two were to be combined together————

"How is a human able to utilize light!?"

"Your sister taught me this!"

The light force of the Seven Swords could even detect the light in humans.

If it could be sensed, then perhaps it could be manipulated as well————

That haughty Sword Saint taught Kurou how to handle light through this convenient way of thinking. Having Kurou put it into use would allow him to grow its power.

However, the phenomenon that occurred from Kurou's body, did it have something to do with the light being from a different race other than Swordies? Even Kurou wasn't too sure on this matter.

Because the Sword Saint possessed such insurmountable light and was well adept in handling it, she was probably able to detect a similar power that laid dormant in humans.

She spent countless years and even used her own disciple as a test subject. In the end, she had successfully brought out this kind of strength.

Nothing changed though. Instead, regardless if it was me or Manaka, we are just dancing in the palm of that person's hands.

Following that, as the two of them met up————— something appeared.....

Kurou's eyes could now detect light after being empowered by his light force. Heading towards one of the fast approaching Manakas, he unleashed nine white streaks of light.

The nine white streaks of light did not have a physical form. However, Kurou's eyes were actually able to visualize it.

Saintly Slash of the Nine Heavens————the direction of the strike was guided by the light. It was a spectacle developed by the Olden Style and the Sword Saint's swordsmanship.

Each of the nine streaks of light from the sword maneuver headed towards the incoming enemy.

Kurou still should have been incapable of spotting that minute opening from the incredible speed of the Dancer.

However, as long as his sword was in motion it should be fine. It was as if he was trying to chase after the light and become one with it.

There wasn't even the necessity of blocking the sword of the Chaos Dancer. With even greater speeds, his sword merged into the light——that radiant blade transformed into a flash of light as it came at her.

As Kurou's body was irradiating white light, the killer strike that was directed toward the beautiful princess——

Epilogue

"When my sister informed me that she was going to accept a human for a disciple, I couldn't help but clutch my head and think what am I going to do."

Manaka calmly stated.

"The Sword Saint actually took interest in those rebellions by the humans. Thinking about it, that's probably how it all started right? Jeez, my sister is so unrestrained. Even so, she was dispatched as one of the Blaze's vanguard, someone who had scaled to the reaches of the Sword Saint position. My sister forgot about her missions and merely lived life as she pleased."

"Even I've been tossed about in misery by her....."

Kurou panted in agony as he bitterly smiled.

Kurou and Manaka sat side by side on the spectator stands, both having lifted their heads to gaze at the gradually reddening horizon.

"In the end, she didn't carry out any of the Blaze's missions and even her Sword Saint duties were pretty much neglected. She practically stayed deep in the mountains all year watching you guys horse around."

"The Sword Saint's job is to be strong.....I bet she'd say something along those lines."

Kurou believed that the Sword Saint had a penchant for finding absurd excuses.

However, it was precisely because the Sword Saint overlooked her other matter of business that enabled Kurou and Lars to be raised to the point where they could muster up a fight against someone on the level of the Seven Swords such as Manaka.

"Forgetting about the missions of the Blazes to raise these two and going against our wishes, my sister was the biggest hinderance to us."

"Don't you think that's quite a bit exaggerated?"

"Perhaps so. However, in my opinion it'd still be great if Kurou-kun was wiped out sooner rather than later."

Manaka smiled and then stood up.

Splash, a huge amount of blood splattered from her body.

"I'll never forgive you for slaying my sister. However, Kurou-kun's sword just now————was maneuvered in a way that I've never seen before. Judging from that, it was even faster than my Chaos Dancer. And that's not all though."

As if Manaka was displaying it for him to see, she stood up straight.

On the upper half of the Sabers black suit she was wearing, a massive gash ran down from her left shoulder to her lower right abdomen. There was blood trickling out of that wound that was of moderate deepness. Had it been dealt to a human, they would have been long gone by now.

"To have faltered at the most crucial point of battle and messed up my sword maneuver, what a truly unforeseen scenario. The swordsmanship you displayed undoubtedly resembled my sister's style. I've yearned for a replica of that person.....actually, that was pretty much my sister's sword that I just faced. Since I had been

captivated by that sword of hers, there's no way I could be mistaken."

"So does that mean you are captivated by me as well?"

"You idiot, it's the opposite. There's not a chance that I can just ignore others utilizing my sister's techniques. My sister's sword————has been passed on to you."

Within Manaka's words, it was a mix between half killing intent and half in jest. It felt as if she was smiling, but also enraged at the same time. It was quite a complicated expression .

Kurou learned the Olden Style from the Sword Saint. However, in the end it was created by his dad and the Sword Saint clearly possessed her own swordsmanship.

After being her disciple for seven years, Kurou not only picked up the Olden Style, he had also learned the swordsmanship of the Sword Saint. Although Lars, who was also the Sword Saint's disciple, honed his own type of swordsmanship, Kurou didn't have the talent to be able to devise his own swordsmanship. It required everything from him just to learn his master's style.

The visualization of the trajectory of the Saintly Slash of the Nine Heavens relied on the Olden Style to be able to slay the opponent. The attack went at extreme speeds ————and combined with the Sword Saint's swordsmanship. Who would have known that using his master's swordsmanship would save Kurou's life.

"However, today I guess I'll have to withdraw. I've already lingered around here for too long, plus it'd be troublesome if the other Seven Swords made it here."

"Are you saying we'll be able to meet again?"

Kurou smirked as he stated.

Manaka taciturnly walked off.

"I'll definitely never lose to you, and I'll swear on that. Anyways, since you didn't lose to me today either, I'll spare you for now."

Manaka did not even cover her own wound. She walked off with Neena in her arms as blood trickled down her body. Following that, her figure disappeared from the exit of the spectator stands.

"......Is it ok to let her go?"

This time it was Sefi who sat down where Manaka had sat previously with Hinako sitting alongside her.

The two of them didn't suffer from any injuries as they energetically moved about.

"We were the ones who were let go."

Kurou stretched as he laid down.

"It takes all my energy just to stay seated……man, I'm so exhausted."

"You're exhausted? Rou……hold on, your face is becoming pale!?"

"A bit……it wasn't the light blade, more accurately it's the light body that caused this. The burden from that maneuver is exceedingly massive. My body is pulsing from the stress it had taken. The body of a human was probably not meant to use light."

During Kurou's battle against Manaka, he wasn't reluctant to unleash it. With the light body, not only did it require amassing most of his energy, he also couldn't

use it unless he was in dire circumstances. Thus, this was one hazardous maneuver. His master had told him before, based on the situation, it might never activate again in his lifetime.

Of course, he didn't mention this subject to Sefi and Hinako. "Don't think I'm an idiot", he didn't want to hear that kind of scolding from them nor did he want them to truly worry about him.

"However, with the type of wound Manaka suffered, if she were to go all out she'd still be able to wipe out every one of us given the state I was in. Furthermore, Lars was nearing death."

Lars was already nowhere to be seen around the spectator stands. Following Manaka being slashed by Kurou, Lars's figure was missing not too long after. Perhaps he limped towards the hospital through his own strength. He certainly detested owing a favor to others or making anyone else torment over him. Although he was not really a stickler for things like he usually appeared, Lars actually possessed a huge ego. Even after Manaka slashed him, he still wouldn't submit to the thought of dying in that manner.

"Same with you, you seem to be almost dead as well. The wound on your shoulder is quite grave."

Sefi retrieved her handkerchief and tightly wrapped it around Kurou's wound. Following that, she then started to gently stroke Kurou's cheeks.

"Ah——, that feels great……"

"Glad to hear it…...but Kurou, where do you think you're touching?"

"Eh? What?"

Kurou tilted his head as if he was acting dumb.

"What's with that hand of yours feeling up my leg?"

"Oh my, I didn't even notice that."

Sefi's legs appeared to be quite slender but feeling that supple yet smooth skin sure raised one's spirits.

"……Well, whatever. If it takes your mind off the pain, then I'll let things be for now."

"Wait what?"

Kurou's face showed signs of being perplexed towards this unexpected approval. Truthfully, after sexually harassing others, he was quite stressed out over not being reprimanded.

"Also…...I must thank you. I'm very grateful that you were able to make it to my side."

"Haha."

Kurou slightly chuckled in response to the flushed red Sefi. She was probably referring to the fact that he immediately rushed over to her after Freya was killed. That was something to be expected from him so it didn't need to be minded.

"Furthermore…...Kurou's sword was absolutely stunning……"

"Hmm?"

She looked at him with an intoxicated expression. It appeared that she was still a tad excited.

Suddenly, Kurou noticed it.

"Sefi, you……"

"What……"

With a seductive look, she gazed back at Kurou as she stated.

It seemed that Sefi hadn't realized it herself. Her light quantity received an explosive boost.

At least, it was far beyond Neena's light.

Kurou figured that this abnormality in Sefi occurred during that one interval where everyone forgot about the battle and stared up into the sky————something happened to Sefi at that time.

Rather, it wasn't that something that happened————but rather some change in Sefi's body. In the end, her light received an increase……?

"......Hey! Where in the world are you trying to touch!?"

After Sefi returned to her senses, she lightly gripped the back of Kurou's hand. The hand that had been stroking her leg and was now currently slowly crawling its way up her dress seemed to have been spotted.

"Tch, is it exposed?"

"Exposed? Of course not! I can never take it easy around you. I can't show any openings either."

Kurou dismissed it with a laugh.

Having an increase of light in such a short time frame was unheard of. Although she herself didn't take notice, he seemed to want to examine this once again.

Ahem, Sefi cleared her throat.

"O-Overall, with everything happening so suddenly it's quite baffling."

"Tell me about it. I have to write it all up in a report as well. What should I even write?"

The arts user's true identity, the already forgotten race ————the resurgence of the Blazes.

The betrayal of Manaka, one of the Seven Swords.

Manaka, who was a Blaze as well as the Sword General, had her abilities sealed by Hinako's powers.

Sefi's abnormal increase in light.

Furthermore, a portal linked to another world was opened for a brief moment————

".....I don't understand the situation either."

Hinako stated as if she was cutting off Kurou's train of thought.

"I lost consciousness after speaking with Manaka. After I reawakened, I was suddenly being used as a shield by Kuro."

"No way! You were the one who muddled in front of me!"

"Is that so? Kuro, you always frustratingly call for me indirectly. Truthfully speaking, it made me feel very anxious. However, just then you called me Hinako."

"I'm sorry for making you feel anxious……"

There wasn't any particular meaning behind him calling her by her name. Except, a change perhaps

occurred in him while he was sidestepping his own feelings. However, Kurou being mindful of these matters must mean he was also in a daze.

He was free from his mission, however he did not consider the fate between him and that inconceivable girl to be severed because of that. Clearly the various anomalies surrounding her went above and beyond Sefi.

It wasn't just the disappearance of Manaka's mystic arts and having them sealed.

The maiden of the sun, just what did she cause in the sky as well?

Furthermore, she performed all of it unconsciously. That's what made it so annoying to figure out.

"Goodness gracious, it feels as if I'm slowly deviating from my original goals!"

"What are Kuro's goals?"

"It should be obvious."

Kurou suddenly sat back up and used that momentum to stand up once again. A sharp pain coursed through his

entire body during that instant, however he still revealed a nonchalant expression as he gazed ahead of him.

"It's to bring back those previously lost days."

That day when he lost his dad and encountered the Sword Saint.

When his fate began to deviate from its normal course, he began living a life that no ordinary human could ever experience.

His destiny suddenly veered off course in one moment .

If that was the case, then as long as he set his mind to it then he should be able to correct his destiny through his own strength.

Kurou wielded a sword and lived till now in hopes of creating his desired path.

"In order to achieve my goals, it doesn't matter who it is, I'll kill them all."

Kurou tightly gripped his katana and turned around. Hinako and Sefi's shocked expressions confronted him.

"Well then, for now I should make a stop to the hospital as well. Plus, I also have to make my way down to headquarters."

".....I'll come with you then."

"My duty to be your bodyguard must be carried on as well."

Sefi and Hinako both stood at Kurou's sides.

Their delicately sweet fragrance wafted over.

"Let me protect you as we head towards the hospital. There's still many favors that I owe Rou."

"I've been protected pretty excessively. Looks like people have their sights set on me for numerous reasons. However…...Kuro will most likely continue to protect me ."

".....You two are so stringent on your stance."

Kurou would never profess he'd be fine by himself.

Wanting to establish a happy family was also included within his goals. Of course, a lovely wife was definitely needed within this family of his.

Despite their somewhat problematic dispositions, Sefi and Hinako were both very cute. No matter how much danger lies ahead, either one would make for an interesting family.

As Kurou walked side by side with them, he revealed a smile.

What destiny will await him, even he doesn't know.

Too many bizarre instances occurred at the same time.

Especially————the portal that opened out of nowhere. Kurou firmly believed that it had something to do with the two girls next him.

Although he thought there was no way, but what if those two girls were the key to opening the portals that were closed off————?

Then, perhaps the scope of the situation was even greater than the severity of the Blazes' betrayal. There

may even be some unimaginable future awaiting Sefi and Hinako.

However, Kurou had already made a firm resolution to continue walking down the same path as Sefi and Hinako.

In other words, if some disastrous future was imminent, then he would most likely carry on that burden for them.

Using the sword in his hand, he'll have to slay others not only in that impending destiny but also for the sake of his own future.

Slash, slash, continually slashing away.

Having faith in seeking out the future he so desires—

———

Afterword

It's my first afterword, or rather a long time since I did one. I am Kagami Yuu.

Since this is a new work of mine, I'll simply just reintroduce myself.

I'm a person who frequently scripts PC games. Due to some lucky chance, I also began writing light novels thankfully.

About this new work, I'll try to complete something that has a bit of action instilled in it. Well, so far it's been all filled with girls.

Although it was the easy way to go, having battles be synonymous to girls turned out to be pretty great. I absolutely wanted to have them engage in battle in uniforms so a school campus was determined for the setting. Having their dresses flutter in the wind as they battled, that is the true definition of convenient.

Of course it isn't just combat though, the girls are also very cute.

For now, there's still a theme going on and such, fights involving the female lead and the main protagonist. However, if people can freely enjoy the girls on a daily basis, then I'll be very pleased.

With that said, for drawing materials I tried to buy a katana, well more accurately a model of one. Its weight was close enough to an authentic one————it was about a kilogram or so. Oh jeez, it was quite heavy. Although 1kg isn't anything impressive, it's different once you place the sword in its stance. The heavy weight transfers to your body so wielding it was absolutely out of the question.

To be able to utilize that kind of thing, it is truly quite impressive for those warriors.

I've never said anything about this 700 gram laptop being heavy or anything, but it seems it'd be best if I got bit more exercise.

Next, I want to offer a few words of gratitude.

Mikeō-san, thank you very much for your high quality illustrations. The coordinator gave you a lot of trouble,

but in the end you were always able to pull through. Furthermore, I want to sincerely thank everyone who was a part of the production of this book.

However, the most important thing is still for me to offer the biggest thanks to the readers.

If we can meet once again, I would feel very blessed. Well that's the end for now then.

2012 April Kagami Yuu

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ Tsujigiri (辻): is a Japanese term for a practice when a samurai, after receiving a new katana sword or developing a new fighting style or weapon, tests its effectiveness by attacking a human opponent, usually a random defenseless passer-by, in many cases during nighttime.